



Music with
wild energy

Pages 12-13

Inner peace
in the city

Pages 20-21



Copenhagen talks Is the future green?



Hopes are riding on a pivotal environmental gathering in Copenhagen, where scientists and politicians are meeting to decide whether 200 years of human pollution and the dumping of man-made chemicals have what it takes to end the Earth. Regardless of the result, the world is on the move to curb carbon emissions and find new, greener energies even if the talks fall through.

Read more on Page 5

Pilot school
closing leaves
fliers grounded

Page 4

'Coca-Cola
Stadium'
a possibility?

Page 6

Vision of
hope for blind
children

Page 10

Mall hopping
for serial
numbers

Page 15



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**CHINESE
RESTAURANT**

End of days for BitTorrent?

By Wang Yu

Users of BT@China, one of the most popular torrent trackers in China, discovered the site dead last Friday.

The only remaining notice was an announcement that the website was forced to shut down by the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT).

Huang Xiwei, founder of the 6-year-old site, also said he has never been arrested by the police to contradict Internet rumors.

The site hosted torrent files, which contain information to help people to share a file with other users. Users connect to a tracker service, which helps each user find another user who has the missing pieces of their desired file. Over time, the software will eventually acquire a complete file using the torrent.

Peer-to-peer file sharing has

grown in popularity the last 10 years. BT@China collected torrent files for music albums, TV dramas and movies and attracted 250,000 page views per day.

Other popular sites such as the Garden of Eden and ydy.com have also been blocked. According to China Business Network (CBN), the shutdown order and block were part of a campaign to crack down on websites that operate without license, offer pornographic and obscene content or provide copyrighted content without approval.

Last January, SARFT announced new regulations which stipulated that websites offering video had to have licensing and certification from the government.

But even before the regulations, the Ordinance on the Protection of the Right to Network Dissemination of Information passed in 2006 stated that providing works, performances or audio-visual products for eco-

nomie gain is illegal. It permits the Administrative Department of Copyright to issue a warning, confiscate illegal proceeds and issue a fine of up to 100,000 yuan for violations.

Netizens worry about the future of similar sites such as VeryCD, another popular site that helps users locate files to share on eMule. Dai Yunjie, one of the co-founders, said that they have not received any notice from the government.

"Though it's a big loss, I think it will be good for building our copyright system and making it work better," said Tony Lee, media executive of a digital music distribution company.

But the government can hardly hope to win any new fans on the Internet with its hard-fisted approach. In a poll on 163.com, 95 percent of the 15,693 respondents opposed the closure of file-sharing sites.

"I understand that copyrights need to be protected. However, their way of thinking has been com-

pletely lost in the digital era — where people share resource easily online. Sure we can see TV dramas on other legal websites, but they can never get the rights to broadcast the latest episode of *Heroes*. We saw it right after its US broadcast because of peer to peer sharing," said Vincent Wen, a programmer and longtime file sharer.

"And that doesn't even get into all the software and study materials found by peer to peer sharing."

Subtitle makers like yyets.net, which provided Chinese subtitles for foreign TV shows, have removed their links to hard-subbed shows.

"We expected this to happen eventually. We aren't going to close — we'll just focus on making subtitle files like we did in the beginning," said Liang Liang, founder of yyets.

Liang also said netizens can always find the videos of the latest episodes on foreign sites to use with their subtitles.

85 percent of families cannot afford home

By Han Manman

About 85 percent of families cannot afford to buy a house as house prices far exceed the average income. The reality was laid out in the Blue Book of the 2010 Economy issued by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) this week.

The annual blue book says average house prices should be between three and six times the average annual earnings of a family, however the 2009 rate was eight times, "far beyond a reasonable scope."

The report attributed the growth to the government's tight control of residential land, its failure to punish real estate developers for hoarding houses to create a deliberate scarcity.

The prices this year were 22 times higher than the average migrant worker's earnings and nearly 30 times a farmer's income. It predicts 2010 housing prices might increase slightly, though it notes the trend depends on whether or not the government is willing to stabilize housing prices by reforming the real estate and financial systems.

If the government puts strict limitations on housing investments and speculation and turns land-acquisition charges into a property tax, housing prices would stabilize or drop, it said. It could prompt a demand from people looking to buy into a nicer home, which could counter speculation, the book said.

"Housing" has long been a sore topic — especially since the recently-concluded 33-episode TV series *Tiny Dwelling*.

The series follows two sisters' struggles in a fictional metropolis modeled on Shanghai. Guo Haiping is obsessed with buying a house of her own, and her younger sister Haizao tries to help her by becoming a government official's mistress.

The show was a reminder of how many people are "mortgage slaves," people enslaved to their debt and living a beyond-frugal life to pay off their mortgage.

The desire to own a home is a deep issue. For many, living in a rented house lacks security and happiness.

Chinese Web portal Sina.com reported that 70 percent of 15,000 online voters said a family cannot be happy without owning a home.

The survey was rebuffed by people in Japan and the US, who could not understand why home ownership was so important to Chinese respondents.

Over 90 percent of Japanese netizens said happiness is not related to home ownership, according to a survey by Yahoo! Japan.com.

"I don't understand why housing is so important for Chinese — important enough to spend half their life slaving away to pay a mortgage," Etsuko Fujita, a Japanese office worker said, adding that it was putting the cart before the horse.

"I think it is because Chinese people pay too much attention to what other people say about them. Having a house cannot be the answer to having a happy life," she said.

Professors blame conflict on unconstitutional demolition law



Experts say outdated regulations are the source of many demolition conflicts.

IC Photo

By Han Manman

Following a series of violent clashes over forced demolition, including a woman's self-immolation in an attempt to save her private property, a group of Beijing lawyers are petitioning legislators to revise the outdated demolition laws, which experts blame for the tragedy.

The five professors from Peking University spoke to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) about amending urban-housing demolition regulations Monday. They said authorities are debating an amendment.

The professors said the current regulations, enacted in 2001, violate the constitution and property laws and that an adjustment is urgently needed to prevent further violent conflicts between property

owners and developers.

A series of violent clashes involving the forced demolition of people's homes was widely covered in national media last month.

The woman who immolated, Tang Fuzhen, 47, died on November 29 in a Chengdu hospital 16 days after she doused herself in gasoline and set herself alight on the roof of her three-story house.

On November 21, a woman in Shanghai assaulted the demolition crew with Molotov cocktails when they came to wreck her home.

According to property laws passed in 2007, a citizen's private property cannot be violated. The government may only confiscate a citizen's housing for public construction, then it must pay compensation before relocating the person.

But current demolition regula-

tions leave it up to the developers to pay compensation. Negotiations often turn violent when both sides cannot reach an agreement, Wang Xixin, one of the professors, said.

He said if local governments take responsibility for compensating displaced homeowners, the number of conflicts would decrease.

The current regulations also allow demolition to begin even before compensation has been agreed upon, the professors said in their petition.

Wang said the regulations allow authorities to approve demolitions even before developers legally acquire land, which gives the developers the right to take a house by force.

"Forced demolition is not the source of this evil," Beijing-based property lawyer Zhao Yuntao said.

"The source is the outdated regulations that contradict the laws and fail to be fair to property owners."

Although Zhao supported the revision, he said it will be difficult to implement since the changes would not suit the agendas of local government branches and developers.

He said a demolition law that follows the constitution and property laws would make the local governments' work harder and raise the developers' demolition costs.

"The twisted relationship between urban development and personal property is also a headache for local governments," Zhao said.

Their powerful interests may hold back legislators from amending the law to follow the law, he said.

Managing the Bird's Nest a balancing act for company

By Zhao Hongyi

The National Stadium built for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games will become a carnival center from December 19 to February 20.

But the upcoming event has started a new debate over what is and is not an appropriate way for the stadium to survive in a market-driven economy.

Its management company first issued the news this weekend. Since mid-November, a dozen of man-made snow machines have been churning away to fill the stadium's 57,000-square-meter snow platform. Admission fees are set at 120 yuan per person per day.

The festival is a far cry from the top-level events the stadium long ago promised to host. But many netizens say it is unrealistic to expect a profit when the stadium must generate so much snow everyday.

The city's downtown has been through several years of rising temperatures, and the central area is rarely cold enough for snow – even during winter.

"It's not easy to produce and maintain enough snow in the stadium for carnival events," Sun Yanlian, a tourist at the stadium, said.

The organizer pay nearly 200,000 yuan for operations, including one night's electricity, a manager in charge of producing the snow said.

"The snow will inevitably melt and freeze as ice patches, which may be hazardous for visitors. New snow must be produced to cover that ice and attempt to avoid injury," the *Economic Observer*, a local economic newspaper, commented.

The stadium's owners have been faced with the embarrassing question of what to do with it with the Olympics over. Its first



The snow machines will show no mercy to the Bird's Nest's already staggering electric bill.

Photo by Man Yi

event, a chaotic garment fair, was the scorn of both visitors and the media.

Several months ago, the stadium held a number of high-level events, such as performances by Chinese folk singer Song Zuying, Jacky Chan, and the Chinese version of Italian opera Turandot directed by Zhang Yimou. Visitors were too few to break even.

Before the Italian Super Cup between Lazio and Inter Milan this summer, the operators

blocked the sponsors from bringing their advertising materials into the stadium, once again turning media attention to its management woes.

Maintaining the stadium costs 70 million yuan each year, not counting the operational costs for each event. If income cannot cover the cost, the stadium will run a loss.

The problem is people's expectations: as a symbol of the country's development, none but

the best events will ever be embraced by the public. But high-level events that do not turn a profit are bad business.

Stadium managers will continue to hold commercial exhibitions and fairs, such as the international travel exhibition and Chinese tea fairs scheduled next year. But as an expo venue, the Bird's Nest could be pitting itself against Beijing's two existing – more affordable – centers.

This year, the municipal gov-

ernment forced the stadium to change its structure and the government claimed a 58 percent share. The private consortium CITIC Alliance hold the rest. Government-appointed officials face great pressure to balance benefit and reputation.

"We'll continue ... to increase the number of charity events, high-level sporting meets and exhibitions," Tan Xiaochun, general contractor for the stadium, said.

Red 'Obama girl' another publicity stunt

By Huang Daohen

The striking university student in Shanghai who was Internet famous last week is now known to have been the subject of an elaborate online hoax.

Wang Zifei, now commonly known as "the Obama girl," became an overnight sensation when she sat behind US President Barack Obama when he spoke during his first China visit.

But Wang, a graduate student at Shanghai's Jiaotong University, admitted in her blog this week that her overnight transition was fueled by a promotional campaign team.

Wang said her boyfriend, a Shanghai businessman, paid 100,000 yuan to hire an Internet promotional company in Beijing when he learned Wang was chosen to attend president Obama's meeting.



Wang's fame had dissipated since the story broke.

Photo provided by Sina.com

The team used the media coverage of Obama's speech to create a publicity story.

Wang said another media

agency paid 100,000 yuan to ensure she had the best seat for photos. The pictures of her posted online the next day under the

title "Obama girl in red" quickly spread to every forum.

Google searches for the "Obama girl in red" turned up nearly 118 million results on Wednesday.

Wang said she exposed the story because her life was almost ruined. "I never wanted to go into entertainment," she said. "Entertainment news is like drinking tea. The first time is just runoff from washing the leaves. Maybe the second or third time will taste sweet, but in the end it gets weaker and weaker."

Wang could not be reached for comment as of press time. Her phone number released to the press earlier went unanswered.

But Wang's confession did not stop the Internet's conspiracy theorists. "Somehow, I'm sure Wang's explosive letter is part of a new promotion campaign to get 'Obama girl' back in the news,"

said Rui Lee, a strategist for an Internet promoter.

Lee said he became suspicious as soon as he saw the headline "The beautiful girl in black behind Obama." "There is nothing unusual about taking off a coat. But why would a professional photographer take time out to film a girl taking off her coat while Obama is delivering his speech?" Lee said.

"You must use these sensational phrases to draw attention," Lee said. Finding things like "news value" and "a point" takes time, whereas a story about a "hot girl in red" is easy to run, he said.

Internet promoters like Wang's are common in China because they are cheap. "In Wang's case, the team received 200,000 yuan, but the cost can be as low as 5,000 yuan," Lee said.

Future pilots left in limbo as private schools collapse

By Venus Lee

Beijing PanAm International Aviation Academy (PIAA), the first private aviation academy, was well known for its internationalized, hands-on approach to aviation.

But last month, the school was sealed following a court decision. The lawsuit that brought down the academy was filed by two students, together with China Postal Airlines, who sought restitution for training they paid for and never received. Like many students, their graduation was delayed forever.

PIAA survived four years, and its death was a reminder of the problems all private aviation schools face.



PIAA's training base at Zhengding, Hebei Province, is now sealed.

More than 300 student pilots are still grounded after two years.

Photos by Meng Xiangchao

Dreams of flight crash

Wang Daiwei, a pseudonym, 28, enrolled in PIAA after graduating from the Electronics Department of Wuhan University. When he saw China Southern Airlines (CSA) was hiring pilots in 2006, he contacted the company. CSA arranged for him to take a 14-month training course after a physical exam and interview.

Like many, Wang was drawn to the industry by the promise of flying and a high income. That dream would have come true — if he had finished his classes.

When the school began sending out fewer and fewer flights, CSA dropped him for failing to log the required 250 hours of flight training. His contract with CSA bars him from seeking employment with another airline because CSA sponsored his training.

Wang has been left waiting since the school closed. Its chance of reopening is slim, and in the mean time he has found work with an electronics company in Shenzhen.

"My parents were counting on me to support the family after I graduated, but now, I can only earn enough to support myself," the man, born in rural Hunan Province, said.

Wang, like many PIAA students, has not been seated in a cockpit for more than two years. He flew only several hours since completing three months of theoretical studies. Since then, the school's flights have been grounded by air

space restrictions, climate conditions and a total flight ban during the Olympic Games.

"The opportunities to lift off get fewer with each new student they let in. New students have been admitted every month since I started," he said. During 2008, the school recruited 12 times leaving it 310 students over capacity.

He was forced out at the end of last year when the school cut its 900-yuan grant for students' living expenses. Previously, the money had been paid by the sponsoring airline.

"I lived on instant noodles for the next month and stopped bathing since it cost 3 yuan each time — enough for another bowl of noodles. I couldn't bear it anymore," he said. "I left because I have to live. I have to earn money and support my family."

Compared with students commissioned by airline companies that foot the 7.5 million yuan training bill, self-funded students have it tough and stay enrolled only at the cost of their own health. "The collapse of the school not only killed their future careers, but also wasted three of the most important years for any young job seeker," Wang said.

"I have no hope for it to reopen, otherwise I wouldn't have left. I have to say goodbye to flying unless PIAA gets put on life support or the airline company shows me some mercy — but I know that's not going to happen," he said.

Hardships since the beginning

PIAA was founded in 2003 when the government opened civil aviation to private capital — a move required as part of the country's WTO commitments. As the economy has grown, so has the airline industry.

Li Weijian, former CEO of Hainan Airlines, left the company to found PIAA together with three other stockholders.

PIAA peaked between 2006 and 2007, when it had four training bases nationwide, 62 advanced training planes, more than 100 foreign teachers and flight instructors and nearly 300 students.

"It began crumbling last March due to management confusion, capital scarcity and the government's suffocating airspace restrictions," Chen Haomiao, vice general engineer of the school, said. In order to stay in operation,

the school kept absorbing new students and using their tuition to pay base expenses.

It was a spiral toward death.

The school gave way when American International Group (AIG), its top stockholder, refused to inject any more capital into it when the financial crisis peaked in 2008.

"Besides management problems and fund deficiencies, the biggest handicap for private aviation schools is the limitations on low-altitude airspace," he said.

Flight schools must abide by the Civil Aviation Regulation's requirements on air station selection, flight support and air traffic flow, but are also subject to the National Air Force Administration's guidelines.

The Civil Aviation Regulation stipulates that private aviation

academies must use civil airports for flight training. PIAA rented four civil airports in Shijiazhuang, Baotou, Handan and Wuhai as training bases, but with the rapid airport expansion and changes to state-owned flight schedules, their training was affected. "China has no real private airports, so we had to rent time at civil airports administered by the Civil Aviation Administration. But as more civil flights took off, our training planes were bumped more and more often," he said.

The Air Force's rigid controls were another scheduling nightmare. "We had to apply with the Air Force before every flight and tell them our route and altitude. But if the Air Force wanted to conduct and exercise that day, they would cancel our existing approval," he said.

Pilot demand the only hope

PIAA's administrators said there is almost no hope for the academy's revival. "Both AIG and the airlines see it as a failed investment. No one cares what happens to our school except the students, who are all stuck without a diploma," Chen said.

The school's failure would be a crippling blow to all private aviation schools. "It was a seller's market for pilots before. But PIAA's death will create a crisis of confidence. Neither the airline companies nor individuals are willing to risk using a private school," he said.

But Lu Jifeng, president of

Jiutian International Flight Academy in Qingdao, Shandong Province, remains optimistic about the future of private aviation schools. "We can survive because the demand for pilots is huge, and it is impossible for the government's training systems to keep up with the demand for licensed civil pilots," he said.

The country is expected to need 9,100 pilots, 25,000 crew and 3,200 air traffic controllers in the next five years. About 90 percent of all civilian pilots are trained by the Civil Aviation Flight University of China, only 10 percent are trained by

overseas aviation schools and the country's four private aviation academies: PIAA, Qingdao Jiutian International Flight Academy, Hubei Sky-Blue International Aviation Academy and Shenzhen Kunpeng International Aviation Academy.

While the flight university can produce 1,000 pilots a year, it can never keep up with the industry's growth.

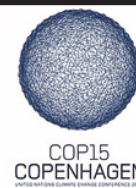
"That school's training capacity is saturated, and overseas flight schools have all been crippled by the financial crisis. Private aviation academies still have room to grow," Lu said.

Hot season in Copenhagen

Concerns and expectations for UN Climate Change Conference

There will be plenty of heated debates in Copenhagen for the next two weeks as 15,000 delegates from 192 nations discuss how to cool a warming planet.

Hopes are high for the pivotal gathering. Here is what to watch for as the climate change summit nears its December 18 conclusion.



Rich vs. Poor

Developing nations – including impoverished countries in Africa and Asia – are trying to build their economies the same way the US and Western Europe built theirs: by burning fossil fuels. The developing world's message to the "rich" nations is simple: show us support.

The US's Obama Administration has said it could sign on to a deal under which wealthy nations pay \$10 billion (68 billion yuan) a year to poorer ones to subsidize greenhouse gas reductions. If that money gets recycled as orders for expensive hardware made in the US, all the better.

Western European governments say the right number is \$150 billion a year, while developing nations are asking for at least \$300 billion. China wants even more: up to 1 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP), or \$140 billion a year, from the US alone.

China on Wednesday criticized the lack of action by developed nations in fulfilling their commitments to reduce carbon emissions and support to developing nations in coping with climate change. So far, no money has been provided.

"You will find a huge gap if you make a comparison between their pledges and the actions they have so far taken," Yu Qingtai, the country's special representative to the UN climate talks, said at a press conference.

Financial support for developing nations is not "charity work" by rich nations but their "legal obligations" under international conventions, Yu said.

Believers vs. skeptics

The last few weeks have been a boon for scientists and activists who argue that fears about man-made climate change are overblown, and based on shoddy science.

Stolen emails revealed that some prominent climate scientists may have "adjusted" data that did not fit their global warming theories: that has provided a load of fresh ammunition to the community of climate change skeptics. Some of those skeptics will venture to Copenhagen to press their case.

But the Copenhagen talks will be dominated by believers who will likely work overtime to send the message that the majority of scientists believe man-made global warming is real, a threat and needs concerted action.

Cap and trade vs. intensity

The Copenhagen summit is not likely to produce a binding treaty among the world's nations to limit greenhouse gas emissions. It will offer a forum to debate two competing ideas for how to curb carbon emissions should a treaty ever occur: caps and trade or intensity.

The first method, supported by the European Union and the Obama Administration, would require nations to commit to a cap and then reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions by set amounts; US President Barack Obama is expected to propose that the States will reduce its emissions by 17 percent of the 2005 levels by 2020.

Industries would then get permits to emit carbon dioxide that they could trade on exchanges to help finance the cost of adopting new technologies to meet the ever tightening cap.

Developing countries like China and India, however, propose another approach: rejecting caps and focusing instead on reducing "intensity," the amount of greenhouse gases produced per percentage point of GDP.



Environmental activists call for concrete steps against climate change at the Copenhagen summit.

Xinhua/Reuters Photo

Expert

Climate conference will bring new business opportunities

Pan Jiahua, the executive director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), said the Copenhagen conference would drive forward the speed of carbon emissions reduction in each country and stimulate new energy industries even if the talks fail to reach an agreement.

The summit would further the development of alternative energy like solar, wind and nuclear energies, he said.

The economics professor also said that in order to reduce greenhouse gases, nations need to adjust their economic and energy structures and develop technologies to reduce carbon emissions.

The energy adjustment includes improving the use of non-petrochemical energy and developing new energy resources, he said.

Positive signs seen in various areas

Bai Liang, the head of a Beijing-based solar energy company, hopes the Copenhagen conference will benefit new energy industries. Bai made the shift to his current business three years ago after years in the traditional energy sector. He is confident he made the right move; he believes the world will pay increasingly greater attention to the development of green energy,

and that the Copenhagen talks would be a catalyst.

Bai is also encouraged by the Chinese government's moves to spur the development of new energy resources. During the New York Climate Change Summit in September, President Hu Jintao said non-petrochemical energy would comprise 15 percent of disposable energy consumption before 2020.

During a recent plenary of the State Council, Premier Wen Jiabao said the country aims to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 40 to 45 percent of its 2005 levels in 2020.

By Chen Xi

Sidelights

Summiteers perturbed by hacked emails

To do it and how, or simply not to – this is becoming the rub with the summeers at Copenhagen, where the contents of hacked emails loom to render the UN climate talks a sort of "climate gate."

The language used in more than 1,000 hacked emails is being claimed by climate change skeptics as proof that scientists manipulated data to exaggerate the climate change threat.

But believers rebuked hackers, arguing that the timing of disclosure was intended to undermine the Copenhagen conference, which is expected to aim high at further reducing the emission of

greenhouse gases.

Yvo de Boer, executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), said the stolen mails will not hurt the integrity of the scientists who prepared the climate change report under the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

IPCC chairman Rajendra Pachauri defended the trustworthiness of the scientists at a Copenhagen press conference. "The persons who have worked on this report, and those who unfortunately have been victims of this terrible and illegal act (email hacking), are outstanding scientists, and have contributed enormously over the 20, 21 years of the existence of the IPCC," he said.

Half a million Chinese citizens support low-carbon lifestyle

Nearly 500,000 people either signed a petition or voted online to support a low-carbon lifestyle campaign organized by the World Wild Fund for Nature in China.

A total of 130,000 college students from more than 100 universities in 16 cities joined the campaign. Some 60,000 Beijing residents signed and another 300,000 voted online.

The campaign, called "Vote Earth," was designed to show popular support for fighting climate change ahead of the Copenhagen climate change conference.

(Agencies)

Name it right!

Selling stadium names to foreign brands a big risk



By Huang Daohen

Sports stadiums and arenas being branded is not news. "Named" stadiums can be found in the US, Australia, Japan, Finland, Canada and Israel, but, not in here, where stadiums like Bird's Nest are a symbol of national aspirations.

That chance to slap it with a foreign brand may be attractive to sponsors, but it is a sensitive exercise.

But Mercedes-Benz announced Monday that it has secured a 10-year naming rights for an upcoming stadium in Shanghai.

Could the carmaker's victory turn the Bird's Nest into Coca-Cola National Stadium?



Could the Bird's Nest end up rechristened the Coca-Cola National Stadium of China?

CFP Photo

The first foreign branding

Shanghai will soon be home to the Mercedes-Benz Arena, the German auto giant announced Monday. It has secured a 10-year deal to put its name on a stadium soon to be built on the city's Huangpu River.

The deal, the first of its kind in China, is worth between \$75 million (512 million yuan) and \$100 million, the *New York Times* reported. The deal was struck as part of NBA's China expansion plans as it seeks to build on its huge fan base outside the US.

The US's Anschutz Entertainment Group (AEG) and local state-owned Oriental Pearl Group will provide the bulk of the finances, the report said.

"A handful of companies were interested, but Mercedes-Benz realized quickly that Shanghai is the capital of Asia. Shanghai will be the most important market," Timothy Leiweke, the president of AEG, was quoted as saying.

The 18,000-seat stadium with 82 luxury suites will open next May with the Shanghai World Expo unveiled. It will be used for the performing arts, sports and other entertainment, the companies said in a statement.

Key among the sports will be basketball. The arena will also serve as a cinema, ice skating rink, bowling alley, live music club and retail space, it said.

Mercedes-Benz said the naming rights were a crucial purchase needed to boost its sales in the mainland market.

The company said its sales in China grew 55 percent through the first nine months of the year. "This makes Mercedes-Benz the fastest-growing luxury brand in the market," Klaus Maier, the president and chief executive of Mercedes-Benz China, said.

The Mercedes-Benz Arena is the first Mercedes-Benz-named venue outside Germany. The deal also gives the carmaker a 280-square-meter showroom in the stadium.

Bird's Nest's dilemma

Mercedes' deal may be a success, but selling naming rights in China is never easy. The National Stadium, more commonly known as Bird's Nest, is one such story of failure.

Fears that the Bird's Nest would become a money pit, sucking in millions for maintenance, the venue operator Beijing CITIC held an auction last year for naming rights before passing off management to the municipal government.

"Naming rights or corporate spon-

The auction was quickly suspended.

Yang said selling the naming rights after the Olympics was always the plan, though there was no plan to post a sign in front of the stadium. Any branding would "have to be very classy and sophisticated," he said.

There have also been reports that Beijing Guo'an soccer club could move to the Bird's Nest to play home games. But Yang said it was impossible for a Chinese Super League club to secure the gate revenues needed for such a move.



Night view of the to-be-built Mercedes-Benz Arena

IC Photo

sorship can be an easy solution for maintenance problems," Yang Weiying, deputy manager of Beijing CITIC who was in charge of last year's auction, said.

Media reports said six multinational companies competed for rights and Adidas offered 70 million yuan for naming the stadium.

"But it was controversial," Yang said. The company received complaints that people would be unhappy seeing a company label attached to the venue.

"The Bird's Nest is a symbol of national pride. It showcased China's achievements during the Olympic Games," she said.

much over the past decade that stadium branding is unlikely to draw such objections in a few more years," Zhao said.

From a commercial viewpoint, Zhao said, everyone knows the Bird's Nest is perched on one of the most valuable pieces of real estate in the world.

"It's truly a remarkable structure: sleek, eye catching and relatively comfortable inside with good lines of sight and well-designed lighting. It is, with justification, a symbol of the nation's development and Beijing's progress," he said.

But it is that symbolic element that now draws such furor, Zhao said. "Because the Bird's Nest is symbolic of China's national aspirations, putting a foreign brand on it is sure to rub people the wrong way."

There are probably a substantial number of people who would consider the idea of a "Coca-Cola National Stadium" or "Nokia National Stadium" to be simply unacceptable, Zhao said.

"It will be a while before it is renamed," he said.

A survey conducted by Nielsen last year found that 70 percent of the people in five big Chinese cities accepted the idea of selling naming rights to a reputable foreign company.

Zhao suggested naming rights should start with provincial-level stadiums and work their way up. The Shanghai deal is a good start, he said.

One example is the bad precedent of Starbucks' Forbidden City outlet, he said. Starbucks closed its coffee shop in the imperial place in 2007 after complaints from Chinese bloggers, who thought it was unsuitable to have one inside a national treasure.

The government later launched a service center to sell coffee and snacks instead.

"A rush to slap foreign brand names on all of China's high-profile public spaces would come with risk," Zhao said.

Currently, the municipal government has set up a management team to run the venue as a tourist attraction, and high-profile sports meet and entertainment venue.

What's in a name?

Experts said a Coca-Cola National Stadium may be inevitable.

Stadium-naming rights are an important source of income for big stadiums in countries with a strong sports industry. Chinese companies are unfamiliar with such branding practices, and foreign companies are being routinely shut out, said Zhao Xiao, an economist who studies stadium-naming rights both home and abroad.

"Popular culture has changed so

A taste for cruelty or the exotic?

Video of live fish being eaten sparks cultural clash

By Huang Daohen

Chinese taste was called into question again after Britain's *The Telegraph* posted a video on its website showing a partially fried fish, still alive and struggling for breath, being poked with chopsticks.

Is it cruelty or a culture's unique eating habits?

A video of diners enjoying a live fish is circulating on the Internet. The clip shows a carp gasping and struggling on a plate, as it is slowly eaten alive in a Shanghai restaurant.

The video, posted on the video-sharing website YouTube in early November, had more than 120,000 views in its first week.

The Telegraph's report said that to keep the carp alive, "chefs cook its body but wrap its head in a wet cloth to keep it breathing."

The YouTube video shows diners, who are laughing and joking, prodding the fish as it moves about before picking it apart with chopsticks.

Not surprisingly, animal rights group PETA protested the act and described it as disgusting.

Chinese people have always been looked at queerly for their eating habits: those in southern coastal cities are notorious for their exotic appetite for dog and cat meat and monkey brains.



Screen grab of live fish served up in sweet and sour sauce.

China Cuisine Association

Eating fish alive is history's bad legacy

The dish "sweet and sour live fish" is an unfortunate legacy from history and should not be considered part of mainstream Chinese cuisine, the China Cuisine Association, a food and beverage industry association supported by the government, said Tuesday.

The dish was developed by

chefs in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) to please the gentry, Xu Yunfei, an official with the association, said. "It is inhumane. Modern Chinese cuisine should develop in ways that are nutritious, delicious and civilized," he said.

Xu said the dish evolved from traditional sweet and sour fish.

During the Qing Dynasty, there was once a competition among chefs, and in order to show off their skills, some developed dishes that were prepared through cruel methods.

"There are always bad things left over from history," Xu said. "The key to learning from history is to accept the good and

reject the bad."

China's food and beverage industry has developed rapidly in the last few decades, and a variety of innovative dishes have emerged, Xu said, adding that the public should boycott the live fish dish. "Once there is no customer demand, there won't be such dishes anymore," he said.

Comment

No excuse to eat live

There's no excuse for people to eat anything alive. Seeing those people at a table eating a live carp made me feel ill. How would they feel if they woke up during an operation?

— Lilian Chen, PR manager

Selective attention

Farm animals we eat everyday

don't get it any easier. We are just angry at the things we can see and take no notice of the ones we can't.

— Edward Perry, freelancer

Only vegetarians can criticize

If you're vegetarian, then you have all the right to criticize this. If not, then you have double standards. There are similar dishes

all over the world. In Japan, there is sushi where the fish is filleted alive and people eat the pieces straight off the fish.

— Roberto Chen, editor

Kill it first

I'm not an animal rights activist, but if you're going to eat an animal you could at least give it the dignity of killing it first.

— John Stewart, business consultant

Different levels of acceptability

This is about the different levels of what people deem acceptable. Some people actually think eating meat or fish is barbaric and an act of savages.

— Ye Dewen, government officer

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Lisa Ono gives tribute to bossa nova's semicentennial

By He Jianwei

Cool, rhythmic sounds enveloped the Beijing Exhibition Center Theater last Saturday as bossa nova star Lisa Ono paid tribute to the music's 50 years.

Ono, who grew up in Japan, gave her first Beijing concert at the Olympic Sports Center Gymnasium in January. "The best way to listen to bossa nova is to sit close to the performer. This time the concert was closer to the audience," Ono said, referring to the smaller venue of her second show, which she thought recreated the intimate atmosphere of a cafe.

Bossa nova, which originated in Brazil, evolved from samba but is harmonically more complex and is less percussive. It avoids emphasis on any single musical element; melody, harmony and rhythm are integrated, and singers use a subdued tone similar to spoken language.

Ono's brand of bossa nova has been described as chicken soup for the soul by a Chinese fan. A letter sent to the organizers of the 5th Jazzy Shanghai Festival, where Ono

performed in January, said: "I was depressed after losing my shares in the stock market. Listening to Ono's songs gave me the power to rebuild my life. Her music is the chicken soup for my soul."

She had the same effect on audiences last week: Some concert-goers said they felt more calm and peaceful after listening to her. Others said they play her music to relieve stress.

Ono was delighted at the response. "I also feel relief whenever I sing," she said. "When I hear how the audiences feel when they listen to me sing, that always gives me energy."

Born in Sao Paulo, Brazil, Ono moved to Tokyo when she was 10. She started singing and playing the guitar when she was 15 and debuted as a professional bossa nova singer. She has performed with some of the world's leading bossa nova and samba artists and has released 24 albums to date.

At the end of her Beijing concert, she sang "Fragrance of the Night" and "When Will I See You Again," music

popularized by pop singer Teresa Teng.

Ono gained many Chinese after she wrote the score for Wong Kar-wai's *In the Mood for Love* and after her "La vie en Rose" was picked as the theme song for Feng Xiaogang's *No Thief*. To many local fans, bossa nova is Lisa Ono.

Bossa nova, however, is a relatively new introduction to China. Taiwanese singer Joanna Wong, who entered the scene two years ago, has released two bossa nova albums. The LPs quickly became best sellers, due partly to the fact that listeners liken Wong's style to Ono's.

Ono said she could have performed one of Wong's songs last Saturday if she had learned about the singer earlier.

Ono's China tour will also take her to Shanghai, Hangzhou, Nanjing and Chongqing. "Besides Beijing and Shanghai, I'll be visiting cities that I've never been before, so I'm looking forward to seeing the scenery and feeling the culture of each place," she said.

Photo provided by Lisa Ono



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French reading festival honors mysteries, translators

By Han Manman

The annual French-sponsored reading festival held December 4 to 10 paid tribute to mystery novels, a genre that has finally come of age in France.

Long considered an "immature" genre in Europe, mystery fiction is now very popular in France, especially among female readers, Dominique Sylvain, one of the country's most popular detective novel writers, said at the festival Lire en Fete on Tuesday.

Translations of foreign works are also on the best-seller list, Sylvain said.

Translators were also an important part of the festival. Last Sunday, organizers presented the first Fu Lei Translation Award to

the year's best Chinese translation of a French originals.

The prize, established by the French Embassy and named after eminent Chinese translator Fu Lei (1908-66), was shared by two: Ma Zhencheng for *Les Essais* (The Essays) by Michel de Montaigne and Zhang Zujian for *La Voie des Masques* (The Way of the Mask) by Claude Levi-Strauss. The honor came with a \$12,000 (82,000 yuan) cash prize.

"Translations, especially literature translations, are the bridges between different nations and different cultures. Without Greek literature, by way of Arabic translations before the Renaissance, it would be difficult to imagine what Europe would look like

today," said Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clezio, last year's Nobel prize winner for literature and guest of honor at the ceremony.

Lire en Fete is France's annual literary festival, celebrated in the country and overseas through hundreds of events aimed at promoting literacy. In France, public libraries promote foreign literature through readings, lectures, food and musical events, while French embassies promote their native works.

The French Cultural Centre next year's Lire en Fete will focus on the subject of love and will bring to Beijing famous French writers such as Michel Houellebecq, known for provocative novels such as *Whatever* and *Atomized*.



Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clezio, last year's Nobel prize winner for literature, was guest of honor at the French reading festival in Beijing.

CFP Photo

Instituto Cervantes releases recipe book on Spanish favorites

By Zhao Hongyi

Instituto Cervantes recently released a book on some of Spain's most popular traditional dishes sure to appeal to Chinese taste buds.

Cocinando en Espanol features more than a dozen recipes, including all-time favorites like paella Valenciana (Valencia seafood), tortilla de patata (egg-potato pie), salmorejo (Spanish soup) and croquetas de jamon

(fried ham balls).

The dishes can easily be made at home since they use readily available ingredients, said representatives from the institute, the Spanish Embassy's commercial and cultural section.

Spanish cuisine exemplifies Mediterranean food as it uses generous amount of seafood, olives, olive oil, ham, cheese and citrus fruits, Spanish native Jordi Valles, named one of the city's

best chefs by *City Weekend* magazine, said at the book launch earlier this month.

According to the book, Spanish cuisine, along with French and Italian, constitute the main European dishes. It says Italians created the basic dishes; the French developed them into an art and culture; and the Spaniards popularized them.

After Spaniards' expedition and colonizations of South

America in the 15th century, Spanish cuisine adopted new ingredients from the continent like potato, tomato, coconut, pepper and pimiento.

"It's a brick we can use to knock on the door of the rich Spanish culture and history," TV cooking star Qu Hao said at the launch, referring to food's power to bridge cultures and nations. Importers of Spanish food and wine, along with Spanish restau-

rants in town, are enjoying brisk business as locals begin to appreciate European food.

Instituto Cervantes regularly hosts cultural events, screens Spanish films and runs a well-stocked Spanish library. It also offers Spanish lessons both onsite and online. Last month, the institute brought to town Albert Adria, chef at elBulli, named the world's best restaurant for 2008 by *The Restaurant Magazine*.

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Care, education and training for blind orphans

By Annie Wei

With the holiday season underway, French couple Guillaume and Delphine Gauvain are busy making the rounds of hotels with their jazz band Instant Noodles. Offstage, they are busy organizing performances for the children at Bethel, a non-profit organization they founded in 2003 that provides foster care, education and training to blind or visually impaired Chinese orphans.



Bethel children are invited to sing at many events.



Blind orphans study and play at Bethel.

The beginning

Guillaume Gauvain, 32, has been involved in charity work practically all his life. Ten years ago, he was in Canada running Shelter, a group that helped teenage drug addicts. A visiting friend from Hong Kong piqued his and his wife's interest about China.

The conversation led him and Delphine Gauvain, 33, to consider bringing their passion for charity work here. Soon, they set off for a

"research" trip to China. They discovered that foreigners who wanted to do charity work in the country faced vague rules and regulations.

"In the US and Canada, registering a charity is complicated and involves strict laws but they are clear. You can register a company step by step online or through a lawyer," Guillaume said, adding that in China, the procedure could be encapsulated this

way: "If you had a good heart, if you wanted to help somebody, just do it."

The Gauvains set out to help a neglected segment of society. They considered their options for putting up an orphanage and learned about the many unattended needs of blind orphans; thus, Bethel was born. Its philosophy: We are not helping blind orphans; we are teaching them how to help themselves.

A growing community

The couple wanted to create a sustainable, healthy home environment for the children, so they looked to the Beijing countryside. Guillaume and a local assistant scouted around for a place that was spacious, had clean air and was near animals. After months of searching, they settled on 63,300 square meters of land in Fangshan District.

"When I stood on the rooftop of the building," Guillaume said of the former construction company store-room, "I could see what it could be in the future – houses for the children, a fish pond to earn extra income and

the rest, land to grow corn."

He and Delphine planned to build seven houses that would accommodate 70 orphans; with the help of sponsors, they have already completed four buildings that house 40 children, including seven who have autism and three who are paralyzed.

Looking for funding is a challenge for any charity. When the economy is good and companies are making money, people are generous, Guillaume said. But when the economy is bad like it is now, charities come last on the donation list, he said.

The situation has made the

Gauvains realize they cannot depend on people's goodness indefinitely. They began asking, How can we generate income?

"We have space and we could do some agri-business. We have fields to offset some needs, like raising chicken for eggs, planting vegetables in the garden for the kitchen," Guillaume said.

But what concerns him most is not the money; it is that 60 percent of cases of blindness among Chinese children are avoidable if the disease is detected and cured within the first few months of their life.

Challenging the stigma

There is a stigma on blindness in China. Blind people are usually associated with beggars or relegated to jobs as massagers. "If you get past that thinking, they are really just normal people," Guillaume said.

The Gauvains want their children to challenge that stigma. Why can't blind people become an office employee or a musician? "My wife and I have high expectations for them," Guillaume said, adding that Bethel regularly invites successful blind people to share their stories with the children.

To increase its residents' employability when they reach

adulthood, Bethel provides professional training besides foster care and education.

Bethel also wants its children to become fully independent individuals. They are starting on the path by learning how to wash themselves and prepare simple meals. The school has computers where the children can listen to information, use online messaging or send emails. Each child already has a blog.

One of Bethel's success stories is Fu Liqin, 20, who has been accepted into a US university. Tian Liying, 23, a former student, now works as Bethel's receptionist. She sends

emails and takes phone calls in three languages: Chinese, English and French.

"If you type three English words – orphans, blind and China – on Google, we jump up as the first result," Gullaine said.

When The Washington State School for The Blind heard of them, the American school began sending volunteer teachers every summer.

In Beijing, many groups are also lending a hand, including a taxi company that offers the children a free ride to town when they go to the zoo, museum or a musical performance.



Bethel's location at Fangshan District offers children more space and access to animals.



Bethel has volunteers from all over the world.

Photos provided by Bethel China

Get involved

Graeson Alexandre, 12, a student from the Beijing City International School got his whole family involved in helping out at Bethel. He visited Bethel as part of a school program and when he got home, he told his family all about the center.

Graeson's father, Ian Alexandre, the general manager of Sofitel Wanda hotel, said Bethel has taught him how to better deal with people with disability. "Do is 'Get involved' and Don't is 'Do not pity people.' Assist and allow others to have dignity," he said.

For 300 yuan per month, you can help to house and feed a Bethel resident; for 500 yuan a month, you also help them get an education. Visit bethelchina.org to find out about volunteer opportunities or to make a donation.

Temple fairs invite foreign vendors, performers



Russian band dancing at a temple fair held in Chaoyang Park

CFP Photo

By Zhao Hongyi

Spring Festival is still two months away, but Chaoyang Sun Park and Shijingshan Entertainment Park are already busy planning their temple fairs.

Chaoyang Sun Park is inviting troupes from Greece, the Czech Republic, UK and Slovenia to join its carnival, themed "Flavors from the Aegean Sea," to be held February 14 to 19.

Last Spring Festival, the park featured performers from Russia, which drew 400,000 visitors, said Bi Chongwei, deputy director for public relations of the Chaoyang

ang district government.

The park is also accepting applications from vendors.

Meanwhile, Shijingshan Entertainment Park will be auctioning off stalls for its "Temple Fair of Exotic Flavor," which is going on its eighth year and is known for its festive atmosphere, foreign cultural elements and tasty snacks.

The park has prepared about 130 stalls: 56 for food and drinks and the rest for merchandise like household equipment, books and souvenirs. Its fair is scheduled for February 14 to 21.

Shijingshan will accept bids from December 16 to 18;

results will be announced at the park on December 19 at 9:30 am. Last Spring Festival, the highest bid was 42,300 yuan – an amount expected to be duplicated this year.

Other temple fairs, in places like Happy Valley theme park in the southeast, Baiyunguan in the southwest and Longtan Lake Park in the south, are also inviting foreigners to participate by introducing their native food and products.

Longtan Hu Park, whose fair is scheduled for February 13 to 20, has already completed its stall auction. The remaining stalls are now on sale for around 20,000 yuan each.

Temple fair locations

Baiyunguan
Where: Baiyun Lu, Fuxingmenwai, Xicheng District
Tel: 6344 3666

Chaoyang Sun Park
Where: 1 Chaoyang Gongyuan Nan Lu, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6591 5258

Happy Valley
Where: Xiaoeji Bei Lu, Dongsihuan, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6738 3333

Longtan Hu Park
Where: 8 Longtan Lu, Chongwen District
Tel: 6714 4336

Shijingshan Entertainment Park
Where: 25 Shijingshan Lu, Shijingshan District
Tel: 6887 8087

Daycare center chain introduces new ideas about child care

By Zhao Hongyi

The first Beijing branch of daycare center chain Family Box opened in Wangjing over the weekend. The three-story center offers classroom lectures, practical activities and entertainment to children aged 12 and under.

It features a gigantic climbing stand, children's swimming pool, "adventure house" and Mickey Mouse-themed entertainment area. The stand, which is 9 meters high, is the tallest and most complicated in Asia, according to Family Box.

It also has a rock-climbing wall, slide, tunnels and rope bridges. But the center's emphasis is on parents' involvement in the children's games to develop better communication between the two sides.

The center will also hold regular talks on child care. "I



Children play and learn at the newly opened Family Box center in Wangjing.

Photo provided by Beijing Youth Daily

hope the Beijing center will introduce new ideas about child care in China and bridge the gap between China and the world in this sector," Ma Jing, CEO of Family Box Beijing, said at the opening ceremony.

In addition, the center offers swimming lessons and

child-rescue classes approved by the Swimming Teachers' Association of the UK, the largest of its kind in the world. Aquababies, an international swimming school for children, will teach the courses. Julie-Ann James, one of Britain's most popular child-swimming

instructors, will come to Beijing as the center's head teacher.

"We aim to provide the best entertainment and educational resources and environment to the kids," Ma said, adding that their pool is treated with chlorine-free ozone water that is recycled every hour, compared with six hours in most children's pools.

Many of Family Box's equipment and toys have copies for sale. They are light, easy to assemble and dismantle, easy to clean, sturdy and are water resistant, Ma said.

Family Box plans to open at least 20 more branches throughout Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Dalian and Nanjing in the next five years.

Family Box
Where: Inside Wangjing Lake Park, 51 Wangjing Bei Lu, Wangjing, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6478 4799

ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiyang@ynet.com

Do we have Burger King in town?

There are two Burger King stores in Beijing. One is in Terminal 3 of Capital International Airport, open daily from 7 am to 11 pm. On October 31, another branch opened in Xidan's Joy City mall, or Dayuecheng. An average meal at the fast-food restaurant costs 33 yuan.

Joycity

Where: 1 Xindan Avenue, Xicheng District
Open: 10 am – 10 pm
Tel: 56894533

I'm looking for face paints for a monthly kids' party. Do you know where I can buy them?

You can find Faber Castell brand face paints at HABA, a furniture shop in the basement of Solana shopping mall.

Solana

Where: 6 Chaoyang Gongyuan Lu, Chaoyang District
Open: 10 am – 10 pm
Tel: 5905 6666

I want to learn Chinese cooking and am looking for a school near Chaoyang Bei Lu, where I live.

We do not know of a Chinese cooking school in that area, sorry. If you want to become a professional cook, you can find a lot of information about local schools on Baidu.com. If you want to learn it for fun, try bettyskitchen.com.cn/cooking-school/beijing-en/. It's a cooking school near East Third Ring Road.

Where can I find a custom framer? I want to frame some of my print collections.

There is a frame shop on Sanlitun Bei Lu, opposite 3.3 mall. The west side of Yashow market has one as well.

Does China have a trade agreement with other countries that permits imported beef? And where can I find quality beef?

Yes, China accepts imported beef. You can find it in many high-end supermarkets like Ole and BHG.

Ole

Where: Basement of Oriental Plaza, 1 Dong Chang'an Jie, Dongcheng District
Open: 10 am – 10 pm
Tel: 8518 6219

BHG

Where: B1 Shin Kong Plaza, 87 Jianguo Lu, Chaoyang District
Open: 10 am – 10 pm
Tel: 6530 7062

I want to learn a traditional Chinese music instrument like guzheng. I think it is so elegant and sounds nice. Do you know where I can find a place to learn and how long will it take me to play it well?

You need to buy your own guzheng before attending a class. You can find music instrument stores along Gulou Dong Dajie or Xijiekou Nan Lu.

Normally, when you buy a guzheng there, you can have free classes for the first month. It takes years of practice to learn guzheng well. Guzheng starts from 3,400 yuan.

(By Wei Ying/Chen Xi)

Beauty and the beast

French pianist with the heart of a wolf

By He Jianwei

Life is always richer than fairytale.

She is a gifted pianist and regarded as an interpreter of Bach's music.

She is also famous for her passion for wolves, which she studies and raises.

She has divided her time between her musical career and the Wolf Conservation Center, which she co-founded with photographer J. Henry Fair in New York.

She is Helene Grimaud, French pianist, and the latest international musician to debut at the National Center for Performing Arts. Her Wednesday performance showcased the enchanting relationship between music and wolves.

Russian-American pianist Rachmaninoff was famous for using his big hands to explore the piano's expressive potential.

For the petite pianist Helene Grimaud, hand size has never been her handicap. Her first recording was her own amazing interpretation of Rachmaninoff's Piano Sonata No. 2.

Born in 1969 in Aix-en-Provence, France, Grimaud was often "agitated" and a headache for her teachers. "I always finished first and would disturb the other students and ask inappropriate questions," Grimaud says.

In her parents' eyes, she was a child with a huge surplus of physical energy. They enrolled her in sports, martial arts and dance as outlets, but nothing worked until she discovered the piano at seven.

Her parents brought her to a piano teacher, who tested Grimaud and was surprised the girl had such a gift for music.

"I had a lot of imagination," she says. "Real life was not good enough. If my problem was a surplus of physical energy, sports and dance would have done it. But it was not. It was obviously in my head. Music was mentally captivating."

At age 13, Grimaud entered the Conservatoire of Paris. She made her first recording at age 15, and one year later she won the French equivalent of a Grammy.

After her first piano recital in Paris in 1987, she became a classical music star whose concerts sold out to crowds all over Europe and North America. But it was

not until she met her first wolf that she discovered there was something missing in her life.

Late one night in 1991, Grimaud encountered a female wolf-dog mix in Florida. She was walking her friend's dog when she saw a pair of silhouettes – a man with an animal which was apparently canine but not a dog.

To her surprise, the animal laid down and played with her. She still remembered the animal was petrified of everything but was comfortable with her.

Grimaud thought she had a kind of chemistry with the animal, like the kind she had with a conductor or the audience. "It was the aura she exuded that intrigued me – it was the sense of mystery, of meeting a free spirit trapped in the net of human dominion," she says.

She felt an immediate, instinctive connection to it. "Wolves epitomize the challenges of our relationship to nature and are a keystone for larger conservation efforts. Wolves play a vital role in the environment; they are engineers of biodiversity in their ecosystem, which is most of the northern hemisphere," she says.

Determined to do what she could to protect this threatened species, she committed her time and resources to becoming certified to found her own wolf preserve – the Wolf Conservation Center aiming at protecting *Canis rufus*, Mexican Wolf and other wild wolves – on the grounds of her home in New York.

To establish the center is "much like my relationship with music – what started as a passion then became a mission, which brings an irresistible burden of responsibility," she says.

Grimaud lived in a small house an hour's drive outside New York City and the center is her neighbor.

The pianist raises wild wolves on a stretch of land bigger than a football field enclosure surrounded by a high double fence. "Wolves are like most wild animals and they are not pets. They want to be left alone," she says.

Education is the only long-term hope for conservation, and as with classical music, the best way to ensure survival is to reach children. The center teaches them about the wolf's relationship to the environment, and the role of humans in protecting the wolf's future.

"We owe them as complete a wilderness out there as possible, because it will have a tremendous impact on the quality of life of generations to come," she says.

Last year, over 10,000 children came through the center to learn about wolves. And this year's figure is about 20,000. "Our work is growing exponentially and we are proud of what we do. There is no conservation without education," she says.

The pianist acts as a tireless advocate for wolves, a species that she believes has been unfairly demonized in literature and history. In turn, the animals have given her a sense of freedom that she has never before experienced,

even as an artist.

Their free, unrestrained and unwavering personality have been integrated into her performances.

Grimaud interprets works of different styles in a sublime, glorious and controlled way. Like her idol, Canadian pianist Glenn Gould who is well known for his unorthodox musical interpretations, Grimaud likes to make her own interpretations.

Of course, not all classical music critics praise her style, but she says that is because she wanted to be free without obscuring the work's message.

She has revitalized Beethoven, Brahms, Chopin and Rachmaninoff with her delicate and nimble fingers. But Bach is her favorite.

The pianist has practiced Bach's composition from her earliest days of piano study. And one of her teachers advised Grimaud to play more Bach, because "she thought I could interpret Bach's music better," Grimaud says.

Grimaud practices Bach first thing in the morning, as a sort of spiritual exercise. "His music is for me the sacred ground on which all subsequent music stands," she says.

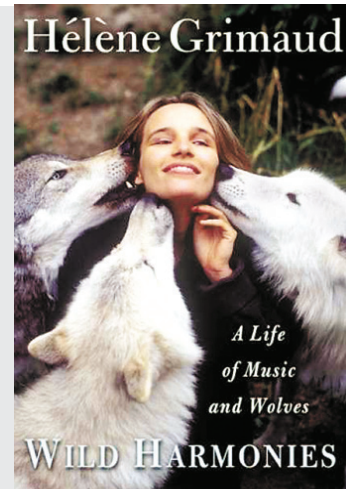
On Wednesday's performance, among the nine pieces, there were eight from Bach. "Bach's repertoires are both beautiful and intense. They are not candy music. They are not easy programs, but are rewarding for the audience," she says.



Wolves' free and unrestrained character has been integrated into Helene Grimaud's performances.
CFP Photo

"I had a lot of imagination. Real life was not good enough. If my problem was a surplus of physical energy, sports and dance would have done it. But it was not. It was obviously in my head. Music was mentally captivating."

"Wolves are like most wild animals and they are not pets. They want to be left alone."

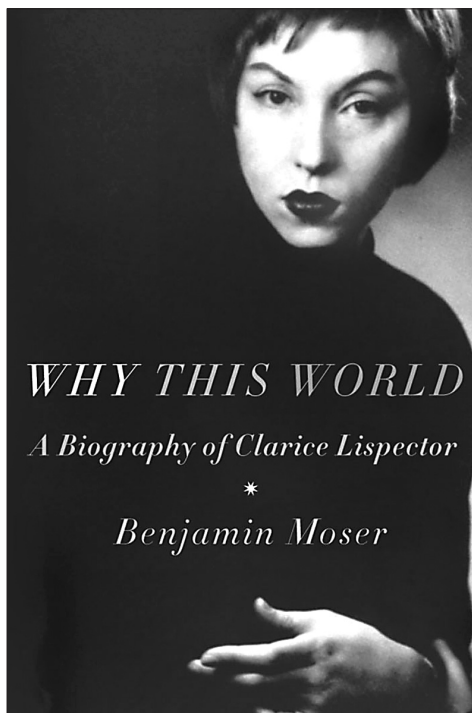


Helene Grimaud's first book about her life of music and wolves

Helene Grimaud is a gifted pianist and one of the foremost interpreters of Bach's piano compositions. She is famous for her passion for wolves, which she studies and raises.
Photo provided by the National Center for the Performing Arts



Tragic odyssey of a Jewish-Brazilian writer born in Ukraine



By Charles Zhu

Life is never easy for humans. But it can be even harder for a woman. The added challenge is evident throughout *Why This World: A Biography of Clarice Lispector* (479pp, Oxford University Press, \$29.95) by Benjamin Moser, a regular contributor to the *New York Review of Books*.

The photogenic Lispector, a blond beauty with natural feminine magnetism who wrote mildly humorous and philosophically profound novels in extraordinarily fine Portuguese, is known as the one who first introduced European modernism to Brazilian literature.

Moser tells a terribly sad family story.

Lispector was born in 1920 in Podolia, Ukraine, to a Jewish family. Her father, Pinkhas, was a mathematics prodigy, who was barred from a fruitful career in mathematics by his Jewishness; her mother, Mania, was from a Jewish family of prosperous merchants.

Misfortune befell Lispector even before her birth. In 1918, Lispector's grandfather was murdered, and shortly after, her mother, Mania, already a mother of two children, was gang-raped by Russian soldiers. As a result, Mania was infected with syphilis. Mania gave birth to her third and last daughter, Clarice, with a hope that by pregnancy she could get rid of the venereal disease. However, that was to no avail. Clarice later recalled: "They made me for a specific mission, and I let them down. As if they were counting on me in the trenches of a war and I had deserted."

The Lispectors joined the exodus of refugees who managed to escape to the New World. They eventually came to Maceió, a port town in northeastern Brazil when Clarice was but a year old. Her mother, long mute and paralyzed, died when she was nine; Pinkhas, a gifted mathematician and a man of moral integrity, found it hard making a living as a peddler and died at age 55. Yet despite such humble beginnings, Clarice Lispector managed to graduate from a law school and became a journalist.

The 23-year-old woman published her first novel *Near to the Wild Heart* in 1943. The novel tells of a man torn between a homebody mistress and a wild-animal wife. Through the novel, she asked the Spinozist question: What is the nature of God's

presence in the world?

Lispector soon married a fellow law student who became a diplomat. The woman, "a she-wolf," had to spend much of her time serving tea sandwiches at embassy functions in Bern and Chevy Chase. In 1959, Lispector who longed for "her soul's true home" finally left her husband and Washington and brought her two young sons back to Brazil.

However, she was plunged into another kind of tragedy. One of her sons later went mad. As a beauty, she found herself unable to be resigned to the loss of her sexual allure. Though her fiction won wide acclaim among the young Brazilians who found in it inspirations for freedom, she herself had become a near recluse. She severely burned herself, including her writing hand, when she fell asleep with a cigarette that set fire to the apartment.

She published her last and finest novel, *The Hour of the Star*, a mystical work on the nature of love, in 1977. Two months after its publication, on the day before her 57th birthday, Lispector died of ovarian cancer in Rio de Janeiro.

She enjoyed a large enthusiastic following of artists and scholars in Brazil. Her fans have never forgotten her complex mind-set. In spite of the fact that Lispector always tried to avoid referring to her Jewishness, Moser believes she belongs to the literary tradition of Jewish mystics who, driven by historical and personal tragedies, create their own line of belief.

Lispector works of art are the products of her perpetual sense of involuntary alienation as a Jew that goes beyond the Portuguese-speaking world.

Life follows a classic sutra

By He Jianwei

"Thus shall you think of this fleeting world: a star at dawn, a bubble in a stream, a flash of lightning in a summer cloud, a flickering lamp, a phantom and a dream," reads the final verse of the *Diamond Sutra*, the oldest known printed book.

Rex How, CEO of Locus Publishing, one of Taiwan's top publishers, first read the *Diamond Sutra* 20 years ago. But only years later did the book help him to find direction.

How's notes on the sutra and how it helped him are available in his sixth book, published last month on the mainland.

The Diamond Sutra and Me: The Confessions of an Underground Buddhist (150pp, Culture and Art Publishing House, 28 yuan) is a book about the author's reexamination of his life.

How, a self-proclaimed "closet Buddhist," began to read sutras in the summer of 1989 when he was racked with the pain and itching of severe eczema.

Although the *Diamond Sutra* is a



religious text, the author says the book gave him clear clues about secular life. "Everyone is seeking direction. Some find it in an early age, but others still

haven't," How said November 23 at Haifenlou Bookstore.

He gave the example of Taiwanese cartoonist Cai Zhizhong. By age seven, Cai knew he wanted to be a cartoonist and left high school. He worked as an apprentice painting comics in Taipei.

As for How, it was only in his 40s did he realize publishing was his goal. "Although I worked in the publishing field for many years, I took 33 more years than Cai to find direction," How said. "Some may say it is still early for a 40-year-old to know his goal because some people in their 50s or even after retirement still have no goal."

He decided to write the book for people who are in need of direction.

Life is a struggle, especially for people living in cities. "Everyone is faced with many choices every day. If you choose A, you may regret and think B is better," he said.

The author said he hopes readers can reflect on their current life and see how far it has strayed from their ideal.

CNPIEC Bookstore book listing

The China National Publication Import and Export Corporation's (CNPIEC) bookstore recommends these new arrivals to *Beijing Today* readers.

NEWS OF A KIDNAPPING

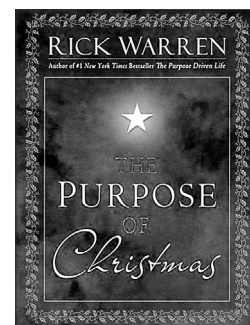
GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ
WINNER OF THE NOBEL PRIZE

"Fascinating... Possesses all the drama and emotional resonance of García Márquez's most powerful fiction." —*The New York Times*

News of a Kidnapping

By Gabriel Garcia Marquez, 304pp, Vintage, \$14.95

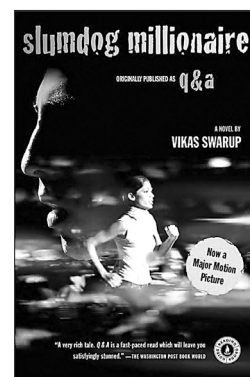
In 1990, fearing extradition to the US, Pablo Escobar – head of the Medellin drug cartel – kidnapped 10 notable Colombians to use as bargaining chips. With the eye of a poet, the author describes the survivors' perilous ordeal and the bizarre drama of the negotiations for their release.



The Purpose of Christmas

By Rick Warren, 132pp, Howard Books, \$17.99

The author takes readers back in time to the most wonderful story of all – the birth of the Jesus. When he was just a small boy, young Warren asked his parents if they could celebrate Christmas with a birthday party for Jesus – and the tradition began that the Warrens have upheld for over 50 years. Through stirring imagery and compelling personal insights, the book honors the significance and promise of this cherished holiday.



Slumdog Millionaire

By Vikas Swarup, 318pp, HarperCollins Canada, \$17.95

Eighteen-year-old Ram Mohammed Thomas is in prison after answering 12 questions correctly on a TV quiz show to win 1 billion rupees. The producers have arrested him, convinced that he has cheated his way to victory.

(By He Jianwei)

Shopping for serial numbers

By Wang Yu

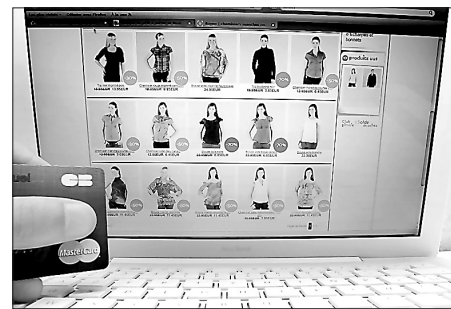
For the stylish people who haunt Gulou, shopping and brand worship is seen as a surefire way to blow all your money.

But while it is great to save money, it's even better if you can do it while creating a unique look.

Serial number shoppers know the secret. These office ladies and gentlemen always keep a notebook in their bags when wandering in the shopping malls. When they try and like a product, they write down its serial number instead of buying it.

Small cameras or mobile phones are a great way to remember how something fit.

When they get home, they hit taobao.com to find an agent who can get them the same product for less money. Tailors and cobblers have also caught the attention of these shoppers for their skill at copying expensive products.



A good agent can make brand names cheap.

Codes on the notebook

When Jenny Liu walks into the Zara shop in a shopping mall at Dongzhimen, she is moved by the new season's lineup. The purple double-breasted coat fits her style and it's great outerwear for the season. The black woolen shawl on the other side of the shop may be the best accessory to create her sought-after Bohemian look this winter.

She takes the clothes to the fitting room and waits 20 minutes to get in and try them on. The coat fits perfectly, but the shawl is a little dark.

Liu whips out a notebook and jots down the serial numbers for both products and takes a photo of herself in the mirror.

"The picture is so I can think about whether or not to buy them later. Of course, if I am going to buy them, it won't be in a chain like this," she says.

Liu works for a PR company and tends to buy clothes online. However, the size of the products is not always clear online, and the Internet offers no way to feel the material. Unlike other online shoppers who chase only low prices, Liu is not willing to gamble with fake name brands endemic to e-business.

So she and other shoppers shop for serial numbers first, then search for a distributing agent online. They can get discounts of 50 percent off the sticker price.

Exploring the Internet

"Some high street fashion brands like H&M are manufactured in China. So as far as I know, if you are lucky enough, you can buy the same ones the chain stores sell but for less money online. It all depends on your searching skills and fashion knowledge," says Twiggy Song, a fashion editor and serial number shopper.

But that requires a lot of time.

Serial number shoppers often visit several boutiques around town since each sells different parts of the catalog. Some stores move product very fast – especially the boutiques at Xidan, where you can never try on the latest clothes unless you live right next door.

"Sometimes if the serial number is not on the tag, buyers ask the clerk to make out a sale ticket, which will have the serial number. Then they walk out of the store with the ticket instead of paying and getting it stamped. It's a mean trick," Liu says.

Then it is time to hit the Internet and find the right dealer.

"The serial number and brand name are the keywords. I prefer to choose online shops based in main cities like Beijing and Shanghai because they have more products than other cities," Song says.

There are two kinds of agents online: shop clerks and ordinary customers. As a brand employee, especially at a luxury brand, people in the first group can get employee discounts of around 30 percent off. Sometimes, products made in China leak out from the factory to online shops where the discount may reach 50 percent. If you buy things from common shoppers, you will be paying full price plus a 10 yuan service charge.

"Though we want to save money, sometimes we have to ask people in Shanghai to help find a shirt that is sold out in Beijing," Song says.

Basic fashion knowledge is needed to find a good seller. "If you know key words like vintage clothing, Victorian style, pop rivet and know what they look like, it will be much easier to find the stuff you want," Song says.

A small market

Most chain stores are rather unhappy about serial number shoppers. Some stores have started to cover the serial numbers on the tags or have clerks accompany customers to pay for the product.

"I have not met any clerks who tailed me to the cashier. Even if they did, I don't think the store can really stop customers from writing down the serial number," Song says.

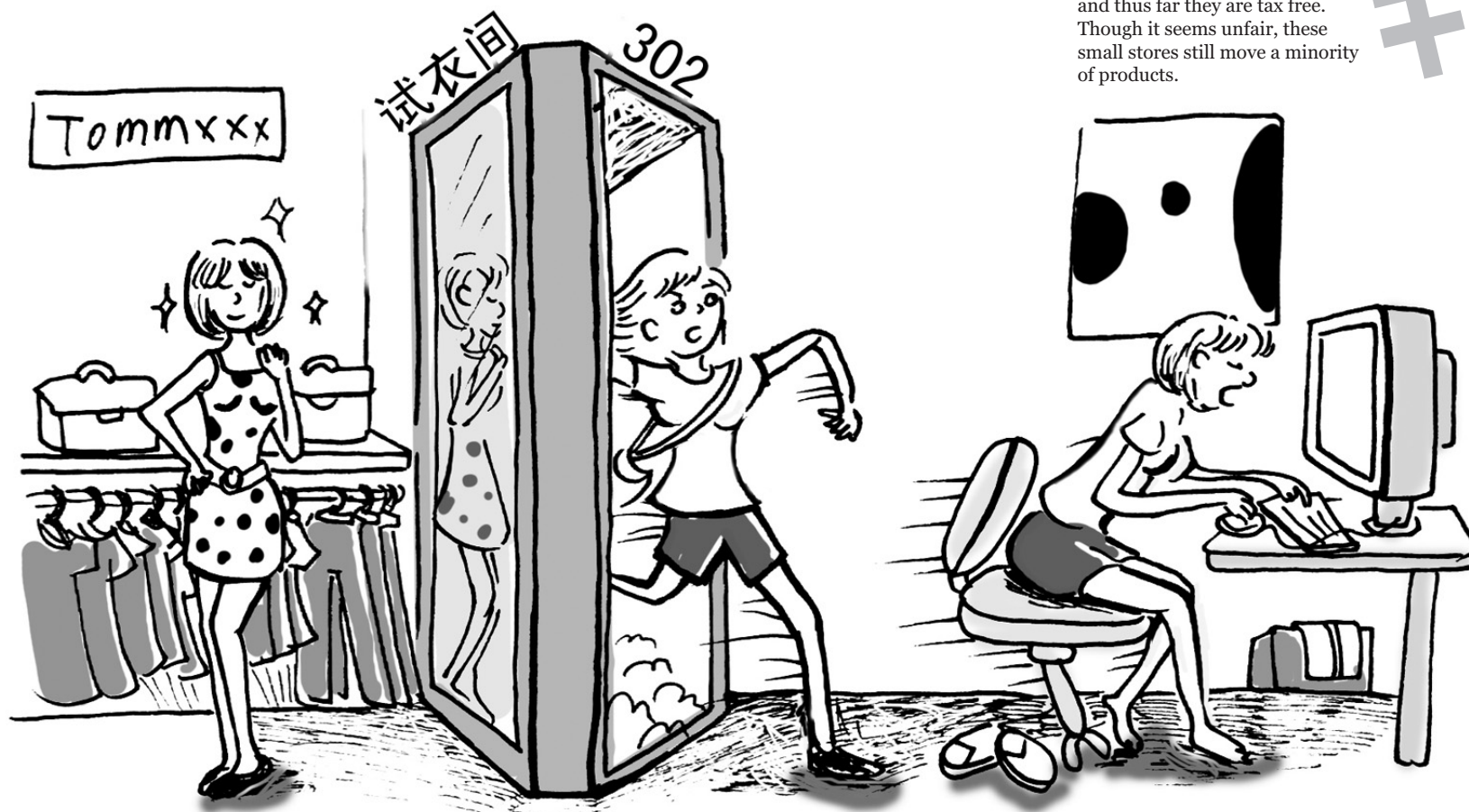
When Song and other serial shoppers cannot find a matching seller, they turn to tradesmen: shoemakers and tailors.

Guo Xin, a music promoter in Tianjin runs a handmade shoe shop on taobao.com. His grandparents are experienced cobblers. Most of the shoe styles Guo offers in the shop are classic and vintage style such as the Oxford-style cap toe brogue.

It usually takes two weeks or even more to finish a pair of shoes. However, the price of Guo's handmade shoes is much lower than those in the shopping malls. Some of his friends, mostly young people in the music industry, do similar things. One asked Guo to make a pair of brogues based on product photos of the British brand.

"I think the businesses only serve people in the niche. Not all customers are willing to pay for hand-made shoes because shopping in the store is convenient and they don't have to wait. And most of my clients are leather experts," Guo says.

Lu Bowang, president of China IntelliConsulting Corp, said online shops do not have to pay for storehouses or distribution, and thus far they are tax free. Though it seems unfair, these small stores still move a minority of products.



For the serial number shopper, boutiques are one big fitting room. The real purchases happen online. CFP Photos

Art works around your neck

Accessories made by independent designers

Silver

When Timing and Wang Lan made their first silver pendant after a trip to Lijiang in spring, the couple never thought they would quit their advertising jobs to run an online store selling their original silverwork designs.

Their label, called Xiyue after their 7-year-old daughter, means "to adore the moon." When the family was in Lijiang, they came across a local craftsman making traditional kettles by the roadside. The couple saw the man was skilled but lacked creativity in his designs. They thought he needed a blueprint.

Timing spent two days drawing six blueprints for the craftsman; in return, the man taught him the basics of making silverware. Timing learned fast because of

his arts background; he began studying calligraphy and the arts at age six and has a degree from the China Academy of Arts.

"We've never made silver art works though both of us graduated from art school. The craftsman said he was lucky to meet Timing after all these years. No one had drawn blueprints for him before," Wang says.

When the couple returned to their home in Shenzhen, Timing began making silverwork in their studio. He even made his own tools. Whenever he encountered problems, he would ring the craftsman in Lijiang.

Now, both husband and wife design their products although only Timing creates them. As a trained artist, Timing says

it is not difficult to work with silver, but he admits it does take time to craft a beautiful piece.

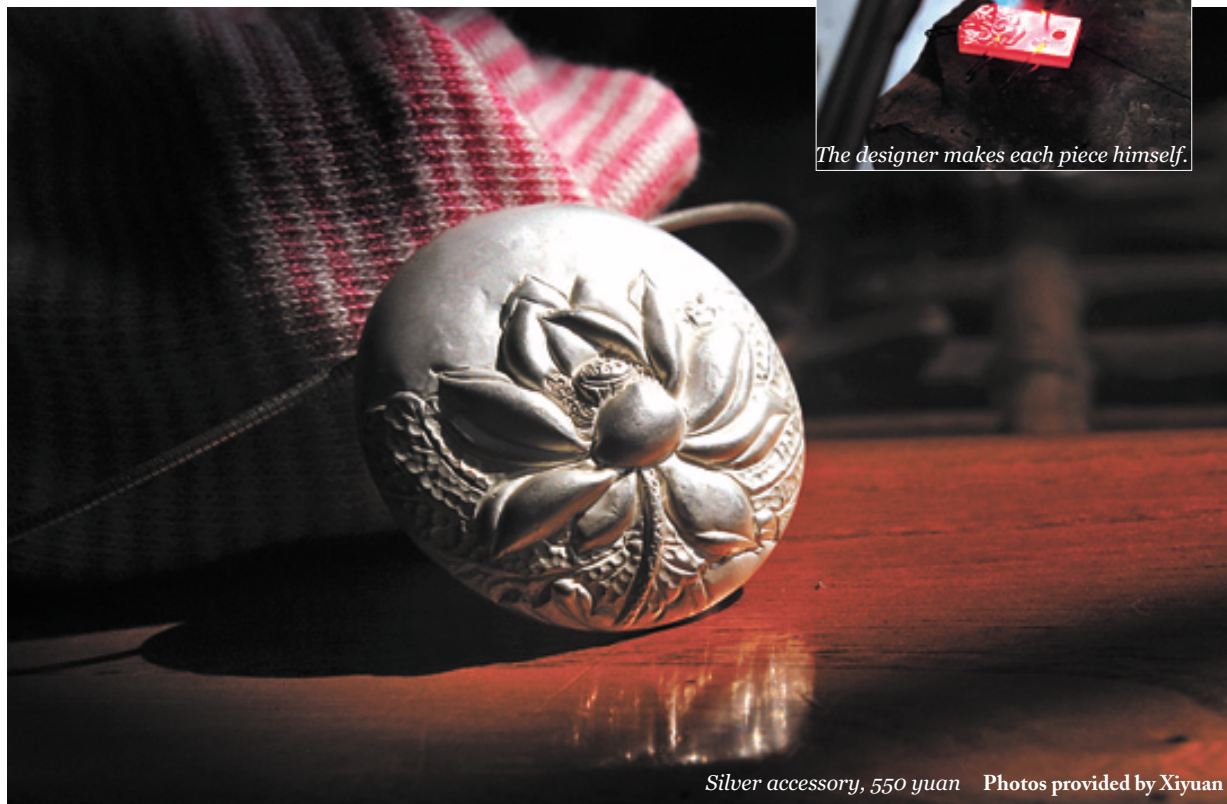
"Usually it takes us three days to make a simple pendant. Customers have to wait much longer for a completely new design," Wang says. "We just hope to make silver pendants with the same dedication we put into other art."

Xiyue

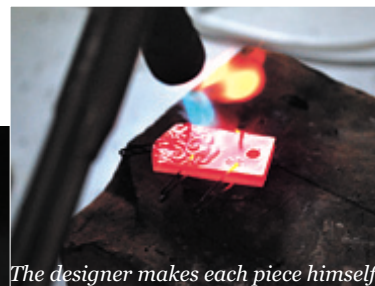
Website: y7y8.taobao.com



Pendant, 550 yuan



Silver accessory, 550 yuan Photos provided by Xiyuan



The designer makes each piece himself.



Pendant, 230 yuan



Necklace, 2,000 yuan

Photos provided by Mayae

Porcelain

Wu Mei, founder of Mayae, taught English for 10 years until she quit the job in 2005. At 33, she decided to go into business making pendants with antique porcelain pieces.

The porcelain pieces are hand polished, then inlaid in silver jewelry sets. The products look simple but are laborious to make due to porcelain's fragility; it requires the skill of a veteran craftsman, Wu says.

"Every piece of porcelain is different, which makes each pendant unique," says Wu, a long-time porcelain collector who was influenced by her father's love of the hobby.

Most of Mayae's products are made of porcelain manufactured in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Broken antique porcelain are easily found in markets such as the Panjiayuan antique market. They include broken porcelain plates and bowls that are rela-

tively inexpensive.

Since she moved to Beijing in 2002, she has visited Panjiayuan almost every weekend. Wu says her favorite porcelain are pieces from 1644-1912, during the reign of Qing Dynasty's Kangxi Emperor to Qianlong Emperor. Such porcelain is brighter and harder, she says.

"I cut the porcelain into pieces then ask the craftsmen to work on the silver. In the beginning, even they were inexperienced in making things like this," Wu says, adding she derives design inspirations from her porcelain collection.

But she says her jewelry require a different taste in fashion. "These necklaces and earrings are not the popular styles among women. Colorful clothes don't go well with them either, because mixed colors can easily overpower the warm and quiet patterns on the porcelain pieces," Wu says.

Mayae

Website: shop33502252.taobao.com

By Wang Yu

Tired of walking the line between cheap accessories at wholesale markets and luxury jewelry at Bulgari boutiques? Then go the way of handmade items made by independent designers.

Turning one's hobby into a business is a tough job, but some people are willing to take on the challenge. These include people who have turned their love of accessories into an artwork: imagine wearing a necklace with a pendant made incorporating Ming-Dynasty porcelain or a ring with a flower made from cattle bones.

This week, *Beijing Today* takes you on a tour of three studios where handmade accessories are born.

Bones

An off-white flower is the most remarkable product of PJ, an independent hand-made accessories brand based in Shanghai. Three years ago, Gong Shujing began making pendants for herself. At first, it was just for fun until she discovered bones and bull horns.

"I like to use white horns and bones, especially from oxen. Such bones can only be found in Nanyang, Henan Province. They are pure white, much brighter than others. Perfect material for pendants," Gong says.

Last year, the 27-year-old partnered with Pepita, a fellow artist. Their operation includes six craftsmen based in other cities who execute her designs.

Gong usually spends a month or two designing a new series. Plants and flowers are her main themes, since "whatever happens, flowers will grow on their own," she says. She also creates designs based on patterns of antique furniture – something she has collected for years.

PJ's rings, earrings and pendants are sold in the gift shop of some art galleries in Shanghai and Beijing. Gong has not opened an online store because she says she wants to focus on custom-made orders from galleries and her existing clientele.

"Every single product is polished several times to ensure it is made according to the blueprint. The quantity will always be limited. That's the true nature of hand-crafts," Gong says.

PJ

Website: gunong.net

Ring, 280 yuan

Photos provided by PJ



Make room for high Thai

New

By Annie Wei

The city may not lack Thai restaurants, but Patara promised something different when it opened last Saturday at the luxury Jinbao mall: fine dining with first-class service.

Patara is new in China, but it already has branches in Bangkok, Singapore, Taipei, London and Geneva, where it emphasizes authenticity and creativity.

Diners who walk into its Beijing restaurant will be greeted by a well-trained server – some of whom are Thai – and the aroma of lemongrass. All around are window seats, which create a cozy dining atmosphere along with the soft lighting.

For starters, try barbecued lamb with Thai papaya salad (88 yuan) or the do-it-yourself Thai tocas (58 yuan), which is shrimp-flavored pancakes you wrap around pork filling.

In line with its “creativity” philosophy, Patara offers dishes that mix Thai ingredients with local materials. Among them are steamed whole cabbage with crabmeat and pork (78 yuan) and braised duck leg soup with sweet lime (58 yuan small; 168 yuan large). The latter blends Thailand’s signature sweet and sour flavor with Beijing’s duck meat, known for its tenderness.

Its slow-braised pork belly with five spice, coriander and coconut meat (128 yuan) tastes like the Chinese dish *dongporou*. The pork is stewed long enough to absorb the spices, making it a tender and flavorful delight.

For diners looking for traditional Thai dishes, *Beijing Today* recommends scallops in yellow curry with pineapple (128 yuan). Big scallops coated in the sweetish, spicy sauce will heighten your appetite, so this can double as an appetizer.

Do not miss the traditional Thai basics: sticky rice (10 yuan), steamed coconut rice (10 yuan) and fried rice vermicelli with egg, carrots and leeks (20 yuan).

Patara requires an investment for people on a budget, but it does not scrimp on flavor and service.

Patara

Where: 6/F Jinbao Place, 88 Jinbao Jie, Dongcheng District

Open: 11 am – 2: 30 pm for lunch, 3-5 pm for afternoon tea, 7:30-10 pm for dinner

Tel: 8522 1678

Cost: Starting from 400 to 500 yuan per person



Slow-braised pork belly with five spice, coriander and coconut meat, 128 yuan



Steamed whole cabbage with crabmeat and pork, 78 yuan



Inside Patara

Photos by Huang Xiao/Patara



Pastilla, 126 yuan



Couscous royal, 98 yuan

New

Workers' Stadium neighborhood gets a Moroccan restaurant

By Annie Wei

Argana, one of the few Moroccan restaurants in the city, recently moved from Xinyuanli to Xingfucun Zhong Road, and has become a welcome addition to the bustling dining scene off the Workers' Stadium.

The first floor of the two-story restaurant has five small tables and a bar, where customers can sip wine or smoke while waiting for a table upstairs.

The upper floor has VIP rooms for big groups of diners and displays huge photos of Argana's chef and owner Youssef and his family with Morocco in the backdrop. The pictures give the place an air of the North African country.

In Morocco, salads or fruits serve as the appetizer, said Youssef, who has been in the profession for 22 years. We tried the Moroccan salad (46 yuan), which contains spinach, tomato, roasted pepper, onion, olives and grilled capsicum.

The first main dish is usually meat with potato, we were told, such as tagine of chicken with preserved lemon, baby potato and thyme (76 yuan).

Try harira soup (28 yuan), which is served in a wooden ladle and goes well with crusty khobz bread.

For other meat options, *Beijing Today* recommends

moorish tagine (88 yuan), lamb stewed with prunes and garnished with almonds, sesame and caramelized onion. This zesty concoction is ideal for cold winter nights. There's also pastilla (126 yuan), a traditional Moroccan dish of pigeon pie with almond and cinnamon.

One thing not to forget is couscous, a Moroccan staple, equivalent to Chinese people's rice. Couscous royal (98 yuan) is prepared with chicken, beef, lamb or spicy merguez sausage, seven vegetables and harissa, a spicy sauce made from chili peppers, garlic and cumin.

For diners who want something simply, the lemon couscous (18 yuan) is perfect. Preserved lemon peel is mixed with couscous for that light and refreshing taste.

Argana also has a wide collection of wines. The restaurant, which has been in its new location for less than a month, is packed almost every day, so booking a table before going is strongly advised.

Argana

Where: 55 Xingfucun Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: Daily except Monday, noon – 2 pm, 6-10:30 pm

Tel: 8448 8250

Cost: Starting from 100 per person



Moorish tagine, 88 yuan

Photos provided by google.cn

Ashram for the soul



By He Jianwei

A neoclassical Italian band called "ashram," which believes that music is the soul's sanctuary, will hold its first China tour from December 11 to 14 in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chengdu.

The group traces its beginnings to June 1997, when vocalist Sergio Panarella and pianist Luigi Rubino began collecting ideas for an album. While they were writing the music, the duo invited violinist Alfredo Notarloberti to join forming Ashram. "We're fascinated with the

word 'ashram,' because it sounds full of the magic of music. Although we're not Buddhist, there's a sanctuary in our hearts and the music protects it," Panarella said.

In May 1999, it independently released *For My Sun*, a demo reel that contained seven of their 11 initial works.

The energy and connection between the musicians secured them the opening track on Italian label Energeia's compilation *Intimations of Immortality Vol. 5*, with the piece "Spirit of the Rising Moon."

The project gained them mass media attention. Shortly after, the band signed with the French label Prikosnovenie.

In 2001, Ashram expanded its lineup with the addition of Leonardo Massa on the cello, and completed the ensemble that would produce a critically acclaimed self-titled debut album the following year. This was followed by shows in Italy and Portugal.

Although the band members are Italian, all their songs are in English. "Lyrics are the 'frozen flames' for our music.

They flow with our feelings when we play the instrument," Panarella says.

It has been three years since the group released their second and last album, *Shining Silver Skies*. The musicians say they are hoping their China tour would give them inspiration for their next one.

Ashram China Tour

Where: Yugongyishan, 3-2 Zhangzizhong Lu, Dongcheng District

When: December 11, 8 pm
Admission: 200 yuan
Tel: 6404 2711

Upcoming

Nightlife

Sound Fragment

Where: MAO Live House, 111 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District
When: December 16, 8:30 pm
Admission: 60 yuan
Tel: 6402 5080

Stage in January

Concert

The Mozart Symphony Orchestra of London New Year Concert

Where: Haidian Theater, 84 Huangzhuang Lu, Haidian District
When: January 1, 2010, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-1,680 yuan
Tel: 8253 3588

The Vienna Johann Strauss Orchestra New Year Concert

Where: Century Theater, 40 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District
When: January 1, 2010, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-880 yuan
Tel: 6466 3015

Southern Arizona Symphony Orchestra

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: January 4, 2010, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100-800 yuan
Tel: 6551 8058

The Blue Danube – Youth Chamber Philharmonic NRW of Germany

Where: Forbidden City Music Hall (inside Zhongshan Park), 4 Zhonghua Lu, Dongcheng District
When: January 10, 2010, 7:30 pm

Admission: 30-580 yuan
Tel: 6559 8306

Berlin Philharmonic String Quartet

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: January 13-14, 2010, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-680 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

The Merry Widow – China Philharmonic Orchestra 2009-2010 Season

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: January 22-24, 2010, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-880 yuan
Tel: 6551 8058

Dance

Carmen

Where: Opera House of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: January 1-2, 2010, 7:30 pm
Admission: 280-1,280 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

The Sovereign's Night by the China Oriental Song and Dance Ensemble

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: January 26-31, 2010, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-1,000 yuan
Tel: 6551 8058

5 Friday, December 11

Exhibition Escape and Return – Wang Qiuren Solo Exhibition

Where: Taihe Art Gallery, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until January 5, 2010, daily except Monday, 10 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 5978 9856

Retrospective on 60 Years of Art Creation and Education by Yang Zhiguang

Where: National Art Museum of China, 1 Wusi Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: Until December 20, daily, 9 am – 5 pm
Admission: 20 yuan
Tel: 6400 1476

Nightlife New Year's Day Concert for Stray Dogs

Where: Weibozhiyan Club, Room 2308, 3/F North Building, SOHO Shangdu, 8 Dongdaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District
When: 8 pm
Admission: 50 yuan (pro-

ceeds will go to RVARS's stray dogs rescue program)
Tel: 5900 0969

Movie



The Good German

Where: Room 415, Yifu Building, Beijing Foreign Studies University, 2 Xisanhuan Bei Lu, Haidian District

When: 6:30 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 8881 1114

Baaria

Where: Italian Cultural Institute, Italian Embassy, 2 Dong'er Jie, Sanlitun, Chaoyang District

When: 7:30 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6532 2187

6 Saturday, December 12

Exhibition Carnival

Where: Art Seasons Beijing, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until January 10, 2010, daily except Monday, 10:30 am – 6:30 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 5978 9850

Yutuo – Zhang Zhanming Solo Exhibition

Where: F2 Gallery, 798 District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until December 14, daily except Monday, 10 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 6432 8831

Movie

Love My Life

Where: 2105A, Zhongsheng Plaza, 2 Beifengwo Lu, Xuanwu District

When: 6:30 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 5191 6192

Song of Solomon

Where: 2105A, Zhongsheng Plaza, 2 Beifengwo Lu, Xuanwu District

District
When: 3 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 5191 6192

Nightlife New Year's Day Concert for Stray Cats

Where: Weibozhiyan Club, Room 2308, 3/F North Building, SOHO Shangdu, 8 Dongdaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 8 pm
Admission: 50 yuan (Proceeds will go to RVARS's stray cats rescue program)
Tel: 5900 0969

Zhang Si'an, Wu and the Side Effects

Where: Jianghu Bar, 7 Dongmianhua Hutong, Jiaodaokou Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 9:30 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6401 4611

Painful Belief

Where: Jiangjinjiu Bar, 2 Zhongku Hutong (few doors south of The Drum and Bell towers), Dongcheng District

When: 4 pm
Admission: 80 yuan
Tel: 8405 0124

Sunday, December 13

Exhibition Black Diamonds – Dawn Csutoros Solo Exhibition

Where: Imagine Gallery, 8 Art Studio, Feijiacun Village, Laiguangying Dong Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until January 16, 2010, daily except Monday, 10:30 am – 5:30 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 6438 5747

Feast – Lü Shun Solo Exhibition

Where: Today Art Museum, Building 4, Pingod Community, 32 Baiziwan Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until December 20, daily, 10 am – 5 pm
Admission: 20 yuan
Tel: 5876 0600

Movie Kids Kingdom

Where: 4/F Wenjin Hotel, 1 Zhongguancun Dong Lu, Haidian District

When: 7 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6252 5566 ext. 5398

Nightlife

2009 Beijing Jazz Circle and Jazzers

Where: Jianghu Bar, 7 Dongmianhua Hutong, Jiaodaokou

Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District
When: 5:30 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6401 4611

Song for Fenni

Where: Weibozhiyan Club, Room 2308, 3/F North Building, SOHO Shangdu, 8 Dongdaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 8:30 pm
Admission: 40 yuan
Tel: 5900 0969

Mega Romantic

Where: Weibozhiyan Club, Room 2308, 3/F North Building, SOHO Shangdu, 8 Dongdaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 3 pm
Admission: 40 yuan
Tel: 5900 0969



(By Jackie Zhang)

Handle your hair with care

By Venus Lee

Combing out your hair is a daily necessity. For some, it is a simple and habitual task. But snarls can turn it into a chore.

Can over-combing, or even normal combing, cause balding? Considering how often the question has been asked, it is surprising that so few scientific studies have looked into it. But new findings from an Israeli researcher seem pretty grim.

A cause of hair loss?

Dr. Alexander Kiderman, from the Family Health Department at Hebrew University, recently published a study of the effects of combing on the *Journal of Dermatological Treatment*.

The monthlong investigation studied a group of 14 women. The women were asked to count the hairs on their comb after each day's combing session. They started by combing twice a day for a week, then once daily for a week, and then repeated that pattern.

Admitting that it was "a very simple, primitive experiment," Kiderman said that once the hairs had been counted and data recorded, there was a very clear connection between combing frequency and the number of hairs lost. When they compared the results of a twice-daily weeks to once-daily weeks, they found that combing twice a day caused a loss of 30 percent more hair.

The result will come as a surprise for some in the medical community

who believe that combing encourages healthy circulation, sends more nutrients to the scalp and promotes a healthy growth cycle.

An adult normally loses 100 to 200 hairs a day. Kiderman says hair loss is one of the most common reasons young women seek dermatologic advice. "But in most cases there is little we can do," he said. "Dermatologists say they can treat about 0.5 percent of hair loss

cases." Hair loss attributed to hormonal changes are difficult, if not impossible, to reverse.

While some types of hair loss require treatment, traction alopecia — loss caused by excessive tension — may disappear on its own if the patient follows a good hair care routine. One that involves less combing, no pony-tails, and no straighteners, extensions or weaves.

Comb without damage

"Too much combing can damage the hair and scalp, but proper combing can be an effective aid while treating hair loss," He Yanling, a dermatologist at Chaoyang Hospital, said. Comb your hair in the right way if you want it to grow back strong and healthy.

1. No combs with sharp teeth

The teeth should be blunt and smooth. Sharp teeth will scratch and hurt your scalp. "Don't use metal combs with thick teeth as they tear and break hair," He said. "Combs with blunt and smooth teeth are preferable also from a hygienic point of view as they can be cleaned easily."

A brush is acceptable, but its bristles should be rigid, but not so rigid they scrape your skin. Use a rigid brush to remove dandruff and stimulate your scalp, and use a soft-bristle brush to neaten your hair.

2. Less pressure

Remember that combing pulls on the scalp and can actually pull out hair.

"The most important thing is to make blood circulate. It cleans, feeds and revitalizes the follicles. Stand up with your

legs widely separated, knees slightly bent and body tilted so your head is below your heart," she said.

Comb your hair by leading the comb or brush from the scalp to the tip of your hair to remove dirt, dandruff and dead hair. Careful twitching will help stimulate and relax the scalp. Long and thick hair should be patiently combed little by little, strand by strand.

3. Follow the direction of growth

Your hair has its own texture and length. By going against that direction you risk pulling it out, she said.

4. Comb when dry

If your hair is wet, dry it with a towel, apply some oil and massage it into your scalp. This allows easier combing and less pulling.

5. Keep combs and brushes clean

Dirt that lies between the teeth can make combing more difficult. Check to make sure there is no buildup.

6. Use your own comb

Using someone else's comb increases the risk of passing bacterial and fungal infections.

How to reduce hair loss naturally

Keep in mind that your hair is also a part of your body. It needs the same care as the rest of the body to stay healthy.

1. Proper nutrition and vitamins

Hair is a living protein. Proper nutrition is vital to hair loss prevention, since the hair is a living and growing part of the body's system. Eat protein-rich foods like pork, beef, fish, beans and nuts. It will not only make you healthy, but also can prevent certain diseases. "Remember that hair loss can be a sign of a more serious problem in your body. If you have a serious disease, hair loss may be the natural result," He Yanling said.

Taking hair loss vitamins may also help maintain your hair. A lot of vitamins with no specific effect on the hair may also strengthen the body.

2. Reduce stress

Emotional troubles can also cause rapid

hair loss. "Keep in mind that hair loss is also stress related, and excessive stress may actually lead to sudden hair loss," she said. Try to be optimistic.

3. Do not abuse hair loss products

To prevent hair loss, it is necessary to not overuse hair growth products too. "Women who go to the salon to have their hair treated from time to time may be causing hair damage and follicular obstruction," she said. Minimize how many chemicals you are putting on your hair.

4. Massage

Massage stimulates circulation, which keeps hair follicles active. Experts suggest a few minutes of head massage by hand every day. Circulation through massage may be improved by using a few drops of lavender or bay leaf essential oils in an almond or sesame oil base.

CFP Photo



A day in the life of monks



Experience monastery life in Chaoyang Temple

By Zhang Dongya

Monastic life is the antithesis of frenzied urbanites'. Chanting, meditating, ringing bells ... to stressed out students and office workers, this sounds like the stuff of dreams.

Chaoyang Temple, located in Huairou District, offers ordinary people an opportunity to live with monks and to get away from the city's noise and crowds for a day and a half. 90 Percent Travel, which offers a package tour to the temple, describes the experience to *Beijing Today*.

Chaoyang Temple is located in Ganjianyu Village, Huairou District. The village hosts as many as 72 temples built as far back as the Tang Dynasty (618-907).



Village with 72 temples

There are two major temples around Beijing that receive visitors who would like to experience the life of a monk: Chaoyang Temple in the suburbs and Bailin Temple in Zhaoxian County, Hebei Province.

Chaoyang Temple, located in Ganjianyu Village, Huairou District, is a two-hour ride from downtown. It was built in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and rebuilt in Qing (1644-1911).

The village hosts dozens of temples built as far back as the Tang Dynasty (618-907) – collectively known as the “72 temples in Ganjianyu Village.” The structures were either destroyed or left to crumble in late Qing and the Republic of China period (1912-1949). Only a handful of them remain, including Chaoyang Temple and the Tianxi, Desheng and Shanxi nunneries.

Chaoyang, among the largest of the temples and located at the foot of a mountain, houses images of the Buddha in its hall and Buddha frescoes on the wall. Its biggest meditation room can accommodate up to 60 people.

Zen in everyday life

A monk named Jinghui at Hebei's Bailin Temple locally popularized the concept “Zen in life.” He says non-Buddhists can also apply Zen philosophy – enlightenment by direct intuition through meditation – to resolve problems, difficulties and irritations in daily life.

Chaoyang Temple adopted the teaching and constructed a building, the International Meditation Center, where people can learn and practice Zen Buddhism. The three-story build-

ing, which can house 400 people, holds lectures on weekdays and practice sessions on weekends.

The programs emphasize practical problem solving rather than religious belief. Monks help participants attain a semblance of peace through activities such as hiking, joining Buddhist tea ceremonies and going on a vegetarian diet.

Life in a monastery

Living with monks in a temple for two days is a novel experience. But there is much to learn about monastic life, so visitors to Chaoyang Temple are advised to come on Friday evening; this will give them the whole Saturday to learn the monks' routine.

Every Friday evening, the temple holds a Buddhism “exhibition” where tea is served and guests can have freewheeling discussions with the residents; usual topics are the nature of people and the world. To urbanites, this is a rare chance to leave behind trivialities and reflect on the profound. Visitors spend the night at the International Meditation Center.

Participants get up early to do sitting and walking meditations, which last more than an hour each and require intense concentration. The monks give brief instructions before the activities begin.

In sitting meditation, people sit with their eyes closed, quiet and without moving. “At the beginning, it was hard to focus. You have to learn to let everything go and just focus on your breath,” Gao Hong, co-founder of 90 Percent Travel and the group's guide, says.

Continued on page 21...



The temple has a meditation room that can accommodate up to 60 people.



The temple, one of Ganjianyu Village's largest temples, is located at the foot of a mountain.



The temple's main entrance

Photos provided by 90 Percent Travel



Inside the temple's meditation room

Photo provided by 90 Percent Travel

... continued from page 20

"There are always many distracting thoughts – this is normal. What you need to do is nothing. Just allow them to come and go," he says. "The most important thing during meditation is to concentrate on yourself."

Walking meditation has a higher level of difficulty. Here, participants, their hands clasped behind their back, silently follow the monks as they hike through the nearby mountain. This is an exercise in listening and watching while concentrating only on one's footsteps.

"Feel yourself: your head, eyes, breath, shoulders, hands, legs, feet and muscles. No matter what thoughts or emotions rise, do not get distracted. Keep cool and keep watching," Gao says.

Meditation is considered an effective tool in promoting concentration, which is key to success in work and study. Meditation also keeps the body and spirit calm.

In the afternoon, there is another "exhibition" and chat time with the monks. Unlike the previous evening, this includes a tea ceremony, which aims to teach people to treat everyone fairly and to wholeheartedly enjoy tea.

Afterwards, visitors practice copying sutra: they are asked to transcribe Buddhist scripture using a writing brush. It does not matter if participants do not know calligraphy or if they have awful writing; the aim is to continue meditating.

During their visit, tourists share vegetarian meals with the monks. "The entire experience in the temple is to help people combat desires – all kinds of desires, including delicious food," Gao says.



Walking meditation is popular among visitors

Photo by Marielle Lagers



Cleanliness and quiet must always be maintained in the meditation room.

Photo provided by 90 Percent Travel



Visitors doing sitting meditation

Photo provided by 90 Percent Travel

Tour information

Theme: Experience Buddhist culture and monastic life

Travel Agency: 90 Percent

Travel Cost: 590 yuan

What's included:

1. Professional bilingual guides
2. Shuttle bus with air conditioner
3. Drinks throughout the tour (water, coffee or tea)
4. Travel insurance
5. Three vegetarian meals
6. Guide to Chinese herbal medicine and fish to be released
7. One night's accommodation at the International Meditation Center

Basic itinerary:

1. Leave the city early on Friday morning
2. With a guide, visit a forest to learn how to identify Chinese medical herbs
3. Release fish in the "Free Creature Pond"
4. Together with the monks, hike the Wild Lily Valley to an ancient Ming-Dynasty temple for the first meditation course
5. Have dinner with the monks in the temple, then attend an evening class on meditation and sutra calligraphy
6. Sleep at the meditation center
7. Attend a morning class, then have

breakfast with the monks

8. Attend a "demolishing the ego" tea ceremony, then engage in an exercise to experience the calm and comforting atmosphere of "combining soul and body" and "confidence and care"

9. After lunch, thank the monks in a closing ceremony, then head home

For more information, check out 90 Percent Travel's website, at www.90percenttravel.com, or contact their office:

Tel: 5962 6850, 15117916648

Email: info@90percenttravel.com



Tea exhibition at the temple

Photo by Marielle Lagers

Dining

Christmas Eve

Celebrate Christmas and indulge in a delicious selection of dining options from around the world. Guests might win a trip for two to the US or Hong Kong. Executive Chef Ye has a special Cantonese Christmas set menu waiting at the elegant Pearl restaurant. Enjoy free imported sparkling, red and white wines, local beers, juice and soft drinks. Experience Christmas in Canton. Private dining rooms are available for bookings of six guests or more.

Where: Beijing Marriott Hotel City Wall, 7 Jianguomen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

Cost: 488 yuan per adult, 244 yuan per child (ages 6-12), free (under 6)
Tel: 5811 8888



Yum cha

Indulge in traditional yum cha on weekends at the Summer Palace. There is a scrumptious selection of 40 Cantonese and Huaiyang dim sum dishes and endless Chinese tea. Try the bite-size delights of Guangdong dim sum chef Wu Wenquan's and Cantonese master chef Stanley Yuen's specialities. There are also stylish, fragrant dim sum dishes by Huaiyang master chef Xin Qing Hou.

Where: Summer Palace, China World Hotel, 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District

When: Weekends, 2-4 pm

Cost: 98 yuan, plus 15 percent service charge
Tel: 6505 2266 ext. 34

Festive cheer package

Enjoy dinner for two at the Arena and one night

in a Deluxe Room on Christmas Eve with breakfast for 3,288 yuan; and dinner for two at the Atrium Cafe and one night in a Deluxe Room on Christmas Eve with breakfast at only 1,588 yuan.

Where: Gloria Plaza Hotel Beijing, 2 Jianguomen Nan Dajie, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6515 8855

New Year's Eve

CBD restaurant offers a New Year's Eve Dinner Buffet at 366 yuan followed by a countdown party in the restaurant, Havana, with free wine, beer, juices and sparkling wine. New Year's Day Brunch is 298 yuan (plus 15 percent); add 70 yuan for champagne and martinis. The dinner buffet for 266 yuan (plus 15 percent) comes with free wine, beer, juices and sparkling wine.

Where: CBD, Grand Millennium Beijing, Fortune Plaza, 7 Dongsanhuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6530 9383



Open bar brunch

Celebrate Sunday with a sumptuous brunch in the bustling surrounds of Elements. Feast on a range of roasted options and Pan-Asian delicacies served at live cooking stations. Entertainment includes, live jazz music, a magician and games at the Kids Club.

Where: Elements, Hilton Beijing, 1 Dongfang Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Every Sunday, noon - 3 pm

Cost: 348 yuan per person with Open Bar (free cocktails, spirits, beer, Munn Champagne and soft drinks), 288 yuan for free soft drinks and local beer only; subject to 15 percent surcharge
Tel: 5865 5020

Valley cafe

Enjoy the magic of Christmas at Valley Cafe over a scrumptious seafood buffet, roast turkey, gammon ham, irresistible desserts and a joyous selection of East meet West specialties. Exciting live entertainment prize drawings make for the perfect setting to celebrate Christmas with family, friends and loved ones.

Where: Valley Cafe, Crowne Plaza Beijing Zhongguancun, 106 Zhichun Lu, Haidian District

When: December 24, 6-10 pm

Cost: 588 yuan with raffle ticket, includes soft drinks, draft beer, red or white wine and fruit punch; 288 yuan for ages 12 and under, includes free soft drinks and fruit punch

Tel: 5993 8888



Christmas Eve buffet dinner

Sumptuous delicacies with free wine, holiday cocktails, fruit juices, soft drinks and a variety of Haagen-Dazs ice creams. Enjoy performances by stars, such as Wang Fang and Qin Tian from Beijing TV, as well as the singers Zhu Hua and Dai Jun. Win a trip to the east coast of the US, a romantic holiday on Phuket, a 42-inch LCD TV set, laptop or a digital camera in the raffle.

Where: Dynasty Plaza, Sunworld Dynasty Hotel, 50 Wangfujing Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: December 24, 6-12 pm

Cost: 2,880 yuan per person (VIP), 2,380 yuan per person (adult), 1,680 yuan net person (child)
Tel: 5816 8888 ext. 8358

Hotel

Shangri-La Hotel, Hangzhou 25th anniversary offers

Shangri-La Hotel, Hangzhou is celebrating 25 years of service with an anniversary package for guests married in 1984. The package offers an affordable option for couples to celebrate their 25th anniversary with a hotel weekend stay. The price includes an upgrade to a suite, a romantic candlelight dinner or buffet dinner depending and buffet breakfasts for two.

When: November 23 - February 10, 2010

Cost: 1,899 yuan per night

Tel: 0571 8797 7951

Festive party packages

This Christmas, why not organize something a little different to reward staff for their efforts throughout the year? Regent helps make this year's team-building activity or overnight stay a memorable one.

Where: The Regent Beijing, 99 Jinbao Jie, Dongcheng District

When: Before December 31

Cost: From 1,499 yuan per person (full day residential

meeting), from 599 yuan per person (full day, day delegate), from 258 yuan per person (special banquet); subject to 15 percent service charge

Tel: 8522 1999



2009 annual party package

The Great Wall Sheraton Hotel Beijing's Annual Party Packages invites you and your company to create fun memories with a phone call to its friendly staff. The hotel's experienced chefs and banquet team will prepare a superb party for you with a selection of international cuisines.

Where: The Great Wall Sheraton Hotel Beijing, 10 Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

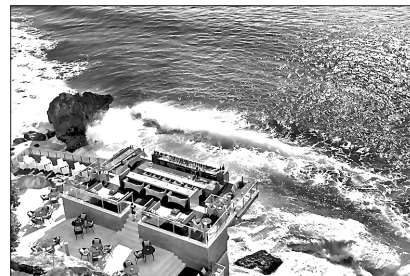
Tel: 6590 5566 ext. 2165

Celebrate your special day

Celebrate your special day in matchless style. From a catered Great Wall wedding to an intimate garden-party exchange of vows. From a grand Chinese-themed wedding banquet reception to a Western-style reception in the intimate ballroom. Say "I do" in Hilton Beijing Wangfujing-style.

Where: Hilton Beijing Wangfujing, 8 Wangfujing Dong Jie, Dongcheng District

Tel: 5812 8888



The Rock Bar

The Rock Bar at Ayana Resort and Spa Bali takes the concept of "on the rocks" to a whole new level, with an innovative open-top bar perched 14 meters above the ocean on a rocky outcrop.

The bar is open to the elements with nothing to block the fresh sea air and the changing colors of the sky. Enjoy a panoramic ocean view as the waves break onto the beach and rocky base below. Jutting out from the cliff-face, crystallized rocks add a natural glitter to this spectacular venue.

Aviation



Singapore Airlines and Tourism NSW Sign MOU to promote Sydney and NSW

Singapore Airlines and Tourism New South Wales signed a marketing agreement aimed at boosting visitors to Sydney and beyond. Under the terms, both will offer new activities to promote tourism to New South Wales by way of Singapore Airlines. Each has agreed to commit AU \$300,000 (1.85 million yuan) per year over three years to fund marketing programs.

Chinglish story

This column focuses on Chinglish mistakes in our daily life. If you have any experiences to share, send them to Wang Yu at wangyu2008@ynet.com.

Going bananas with banana-crazy monkeys

By He Jianwei

Last summer, Frank Guo and two of his female colleagues joined a training course in Sichuan Province. They had one day off during the training and Frank suggested they visit Emei Mountain, the tallest of the country's Four Sacred Buddhist Mountains.

The country's first Buddhist temple was built on the mountain in the first century. During the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, at least 70 Buddhist monasteries were built there, most of them near its peak.

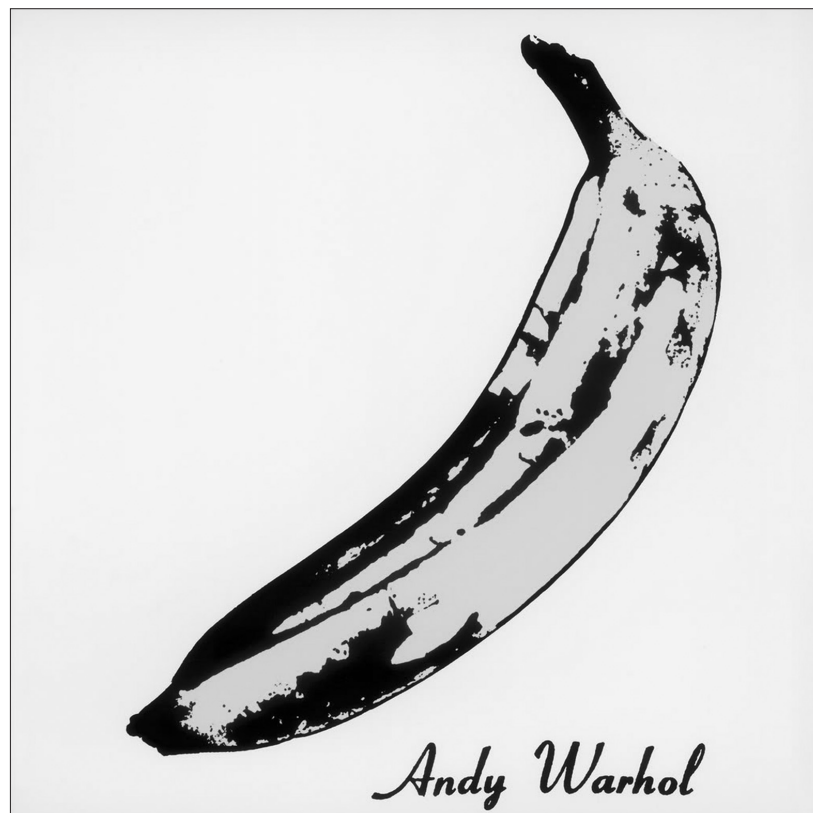
Emei boasts of a spectacular view of the sunrise and a sea of clouds from the mountain's "golden summit."

Besides its wonderful natural scenery, Emei has also become synonymous with monkeys. On their way to the peak, tourists will see dozens of monkeys hanging from trees and some crouching beside the road. Vendors sell nuts and bananas that tourists can feed the animals.

Guo bought several bananas at the foot of the mountain and put them in a sack. On their way up the mountain, whenever Guo held out a banana, monkeys appeared. He threw one to a group nearby; the fastest one caught it and immediately devoured it. The others stared at the bananas still in Guo's hands.

A minute later, a monkey jumped out of nowhere and grabbed the bananas from Guo's grip. This frightened Guo and his companions. The women told him to just throw everything to the monkeys so they would disappear.

Guo pulled out all bananas from the sack and threw them to the animals.



"Here, bananas!"

More monkeys appeared, scrambling to get to the fruit. But after the animals finished everything, they still kept following Guo, staring at his empty sack.

Guo turned the sack inside out to show the monkeys there were no more bananas. "I'm going to go bananas if they

continue to follow me," he said.

"You mean you'll get more bananas?" one of his colleagues, Sandy Chen, said, a quizzical look on her face.

"No, I meant the monkeys will make me go crazy if they don't leave me alone. If you were me, wouldn't you?" Guo said.

Blacklist

This is a column of words or phrases commonly misused by Chinese speakers. If you're planning to be an English teacher, reporter or employee of a multinational company, then watch out for this page each week.

1. Eats, eatery

Professor Zhu Shida (ZS):

Modern English is going through a dramatic process of evolution as life is turning increasingly faster-paced and sophisticated. Here is the word "eat" for example. It used to be a verb. But, now, it has become a noun meaning "food" in American slang. The slang has made its way into the mainstream and appears in standard English newspapers and magazines: They smiled and smiled, they dandled babies, they staged fiestas with free eats. (Harper's) The same holds true for the word "restaurant." It originates in the participle form of the old French verb "to restore." The Americans tend to use a simpler form of the word, "eatery." It is informal: There no longer seems to be the one indispensably fashionable eatery or hangout where the artist must waste part of his time daily. (New York Times)

Native speaker Steven Sandor

(SS): Eats is often used as a word to stand in for food, much as the same way cuisine is. Technically, "cuisine" refers to the method of preparing food – but that never stopped four-star restaurants from selling "fine cuisine." Eats is typically used to describe food that is, in a manner of speaking, for the everyman: eats rarely come paired with bottles of imported French wine. It is the kind of food which would be described with marketing adjectives like "hearty" and "homestyle."

2. Rules that restrict plane passengers to carry on liquids

ZS: We used to have the phrase "to restrict somebody to something." For instance, Old China restricted women to domestic work. Or, The woods restrict our vision. It will not do if we say "to restrict somebody to do something." It has to be: "to restrict somebody to doing something." For an example: We shall have to restrict the boys to running within this playground for the sake of security. It will be a gerund phrase serving as the object of the preposition "to." So, the sentence should be: Rules that restrict the plane passengers to carrying on liquids.

SS: This sentence is bungled, and most of the confusion come from one mistakenly chosen preposition. Anyone who has been following the news for several years knows the airlines restrict which liquids passengers may carry onboard whenever there is a crisis. The fragment should read, "rules that restrict plane passengers from carrying on liquids." Perhaps "boarding with liquids" or "bringing liquids in their carry-on" would be more specific.

3. When it comes to deal with the coal mine bosses

ZS: "When it comes to" is a set phrase meaning "as to." It should not be followed by an infinitive, but a participle phrase. The beginners in English writing are fairly prone to committing this error. The correct way of saying it should be: When it comes to dealing with the coal mine bosses, the policy for production safety has to be tough. I have another example for you: When it comes to preserving our cultural heritage, we have to hold ourselves responsible for our posterity.

SS: I agree with the professor's correction.

Chinglish on the way

This column aims to identify Chinglish in public areas. If you see any Chinglish signs, please send a picture of it to wangyu2008@ynet.com together with your name and address.



Photo provided by Chinglish.de

Meet carefully or Mind your hair?

By Tiffany Tan

I like "mind your hair"; it's hitting two birds with one stone. If you care about your hairdo, doesn't it follow that you won't allow your head to bump into anything? It's telling you to stay pretty and stay safe.

I think the women and the metrosexuals, in particular, will appreciate this sign, so we'll give it points for creativity and keep it. I think the writer just got confused what to call certain body parts.

"Meet carefully" is another

matter. It is Chinglish at its most innocent yet most brilliant. The last word, *pengtou*, can mean "to meet," as in, to set a time and location to meet somebody. *Pengmian* would be a synonym in this sense.

Pengtou can also mean "to bump your head," which is what the sign wanted to convey. True, there can be a meeting involved – of one's head and the wall or the ceiling – but no matter how carefully, that's something we're trying to prevent. The sign can be rewritten as "Mind your head" or "Watch your head."

The Countess (2009)

Movie of the week

Julie Delpy commands the screen in an auteur and Gothic piece of exquisite detail. Careful attention was used in recreating this macabre 17th century tale of the cold and formidable Hungarian Countess Erzebet Bathory – a woman driven by power, lust and vanity.

The film is simplistic in its concept and narrative structure, but the execution is still striking and alluring and all the more impressive considering it was crafted by one person. Delpy directs with a keen eye for character introspection and morbid spectacle, writes with remarkable depth and composes a beautiful fitting score. The lead actress's facial expressions was between haunting and harrowing.

Synopsis

Erzebet Bathory is the 17th century countess whose love of a younger man drove her to madness and beyond. At the dawn of the 17th century, the Countess Bathory was the most powerful woman in Hungary. At the age of 14, she married a powerful warlord twice her age and bore him four children. While her husband was away fighting wars, Countess Bathory maintained their estate with the help of her one true confidant, a powerful witch named Anna Darvulia.

After her husband died, Countess Bathory fell deeply in love with a young nobleman named Istvan, whom she encountered at a lavish feast. Istvan too was smitten, though his relationship with the countess was cut short when his father, Count Thurzo, forced him to break off the romance. Eventually Bathory's blinding sadness gives way to irreversible madness, and she becomes convinced that she can maintain her youth and beauty by bathing in the blood of virgins.

Scene 1

(After her husband dies, Erzebet Bathory negotiates with the King about her land and army.)

Erzebet Bathory (E): You see, it is essential to pay soldiers well.

The King (K): I know, dear countess. But the peasants who escape from slaughter are dying of hunger. Please, have patience and allow me to pay you later.

E: It would be difficult to ...

K: Should I assign a guardian to manage your estate? You know I disapprove of a widow handling her lands alone.

E: I can manage perfectly well. You know, my husband had little to do with such matters.

K: Well, then you can sell some land, hire younger men – then pay them less.

E: I am not too keen to impoverish my estate and send children to war. But if you demand it, I will. I will keep the Turks out of what is left of Hungary no matter what it costs me.

K: You are my best ally (1).



Scene 2

(Erzebet meets Istvan in a ball.)

Istvan (I): I do not think I have had the pleasure of meeting you before.

E: Pleased to meet you again, Thurzo. I knew your late mother quite very well. She was lovely. I am Countess Bathory.

I: Countess Erzebet Bathory?

E: Yes. What have you heard about me?

I: That everyone respects and fears you ... Forgive me ...

E: I do not object to being feared. Do I inspire fear in (2) you?

I: Not at all. I'm so very honored to meet you.

E: And I you.

I: I am awfully sorry about Count Nadasky.

E: It was a dreadful shock to me and my children

I: Might be a manner to ask, but does your widowhood forbid you to dance?

E: No.

Vocabulary

1. **ally:** a friend
2. **inspire fear in one:** to make someone feel scared
3. **texture:** the appearance and feel of a surface
4. **be tied to:** to be bound
5. **ask for someone's hand:** to propose marriage

(By Wang Yu)



Scene 3

(Erzebet talks with Anna Darvulia about her young lover.)

E: Be careful, they cost me a fortune in Vienna. I had this one made for you, my dear. I have so much to tell you. I had an affair with a young man. It was so lovely.

Anna Darvulia (A): Good.

E: Do you have more of that ointment to make my skin soft?

A: Softer for that young man? Lust, it will gain you nothing.

E: It is not lust, not this time. I have never felt this way. Even when I was a girl.

A: I thought you were strong.

E: Darvulia, love is not a sign of weakness. It is the most noble feeling known to man.

A: Assuming he is the one.

E: You should see his skin. So soft, so perfect.

A: Is it him you are fond of, or just texture (3) of his young skin?

E: Do not be a witch!

A: How old?

E: 21.

A: Who is he?

E: Istvan Thurzo. His father wishes for their bloodline to be tied to (4) mine.

A: Oh, are you planning on asking for his hand (5)? Keep him as a lover, if you wish, but do not forget your rank. He is 21 while you're soon to be 39.

E: He's very mature for his age.

A: Of course he is! Erzebet, young people change their mind all the time. He can have any woman.

E: I am not enjoy your company today, you old hag!

A: I am your servant as always. But I remind you that I am younger than you.

E: Enough!

Scene 4

(Istvan is locked in his room by his father before he can escape with Erzebet.)

I: You have no right to keep me in this room.

Count Thurzo (C):

You disobeyed me and met with her again.

I: She has been waiting for me since yesterday.

C: I found out about your foolish plan to escape with her. She has countless minions. You are just one of many, my son.

I: I do not believe she feels the same about me as she does about her other lovers.

C: You got what you wanted from her. Everything that is conquered is destroyed.

I: Conquered? If the goal was to honor Countess Bathory, yes, the goal was reached, more than once. But unlike you, I do not see anything destructive in the act of love. We are not talking about a lands to conquer or a competitor must be bested. We are talking about a kind woman and the very noble feeling we share.

C: The same noble feeling that you share with Baroness von Kraj?

I: You know very well that I have not seen von Kraj since I met Erzebet. I do love her, father.

C: Love is a myth to keep the minds of young peasants and the virgins occupied with a dream. It has no place in our world.

